

Lev. Chm. R

A

COMMENT

Upon some remarkable Passages in

CHRIST'S PRAYER,

AT THE

CLOSE OF HIS PUBLIC MINISTRY;

More particularly JOHN xvii. 5.

O R,

An ATTEMPT to obviate and correct sundry
mistaken Notions concerning our SAVIOUR'S
PERSONAL CHARACTER.

In three Parts.

Wherein occasional NOTES and REFLECTIONS are inter-
spersed, which point out the Practical Use and Moral
Tendency of the SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE, in this very
important Article.

P. Cardale

Jesus of Nazareth, a MAN approved of God, Acts. ii. 22.

*A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your
Brethren, like unto me, him shall ye hear in all Things,
Acts iii. 22.*

L O N D O N:

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M.DCC.LXXII.

PART I

On the true and proper Humanity of CHRIST

TO entertain all just, honourable, and worthy notions of Christianity, as it is represented to us in the writings of the new testament, is certainly a matter of the highest importance to mankind. And it is no less certain, that all wrong and mistaken notions of it must be, more or less, harmful and prejudicial to the interests of true religion: especially when they are received, as sacred truths, or scriptures; and when those who have once imbibed them, or have been bred up in them, are afraid to examine them with the freedom and impartiality which they ought to do. — But it is, and much to be regretted, that the scriptures have, in many parts, been made soilly, with various whimsical and contentious, which

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have been taught and set up in lieu of them; and which are not only contrary to the real meaning of the sacred writers, but in many respects absurd and inconsistent in themselves, and even repugnant to the most fundamental principles of all religion, both natural and revealed; as if such and such articles of *human contrivance*, and not the *scriptures of truth*, were the only criterion by which to judge of the true, sound, and orthodox faith.

Now, since the doctrine of the UNITY, or of *one God*, is the first and chief article, and has been always allowed to hold the first place, in every creed, this will naturally introduce the immediate and present design of this paper, by leading us to make some interesting and serious reflexions, which must, I think, be very plain and obvious to a common understanding.

If the *Unity* of God then, is the first and leading principle in religion, and the truth of this article was never once called in question by those who have been most divided in other matters, (a) I may fairly ask, what a weak and groundless opinion

(a) The appropriate exclusive character of *one God* belongs to the *Father* alone. And accordingly bishop *Pearson* has observed, that in the churches of the *East*, before the council of *Nice*, the first article of what is called the *apostles* creed,

opinion must that be which many have entertained concerning the *person of Christ*; as if he, the *man Christ Jesus*, differed from all other men, in having two distinct natures, the human and the divine, or that of God and man, essentially and personally united? This, I am verily persuaded, has led many pious, well meaning persons, through the strength of custom and prejudice, or the want of honest and free enquiry, to put a wrong, and oftentimes a very absurd sense upon many passages of the new testament. I shall only instance, at present, in the text here referred to in St. John's Gospel,

creed, stood thus; "I believe in *ONE* God, the Father, &c."—The *Jewish*, the *Christian*, the *Mahometan*, the *Platonic* doctrine do all harmonize in this point. *Maximus Tyrius*, in his dissertation *de Deo*, has observed, that though men differ ever so much in their opinion about other matters, yet in this they all agree, that there is *one* God, the *King* and *Father* of all: *in eo Græcus cum Barbaro, Mediterraneus, cum insulano, sapiens consentit cum stulto*.—And *Justin Martyr* has referred us, in particular, to the testimony of *Sophocles*, *Homer* and other Gentile writers. Vide, *ad Græcos Cohort.*—

Though angels in heaven, and magistrates on earth, are called Gods, it is only in a figurative sense. The souls also of departed saints and heroes have been looked upon as lesser inferior deities or mediators; but the Christian religion expressly teacheth us, that there is but *one* God the Father, of whom are all things,—and one Lord Jesus Christ, the appointed mediator, by whom are all things. 1 Cor. viii. 5, 6.

oh. xviii. 5. And now, O Father, glorify thou me *with thy own self*, &c. where a well known Expositor, who has, upon many accounts, been very deservedly esteemed, writes thus: "though Christ as *God* was here prayed *to*, Christ as *man* prayed" (b). See here the power and strength of systematic prejudice, or of an early prepossession in favor of a wrong hypothesis.

A text which, I think, most clearly and strongly evinces our Saviour's true and proper *humanity* is here surprisingly forced, and *strained*, to countenance the doctrine of his true and proper *Deity*. But, surely, he that here prays must be *another* being, a *distinct* person from him to whom the prayer is addressed. And there must be a strange unaccountable bias hanging upon the minds of men, where such an assertion, such a comment as this can be admitted as true, or where any such doctrine can be drawn from these words, or indeed from any other, as gives the least sanction or support to it.—But, not to enquire into other passages, it is pretty clear to me, that such a gloss as this, put upon our Saviour's prayer in this chapter, must necessarily convey a wrong sentiment or idea of his true personal character. It is indeed highly injurious

(b) See Henry in loco. But here might it not be asked? Did Christ ever call himself *his Father*?

to the sacred text, and offers violence to the understanding. It involves in it a manifest absurdity and contradiction, and is altogether visionary. And yet we cannot but see in a thousand other instances, as well as this, how far the prejudices, which arise from particular methods of study and education, from custom and example, or the undue influence of Parents, Tutors, Ancestors, and the like, have unhappily tended to prevent a due freedom of thought,—to pervert the understanding, and warp the judgment,—and even to bias and mislead many very worthy considerable writers, and eminent divines.

I would be far from entering into quarrelsome contention with any who may differ from me in their religious sentiments: But I may be allowed to expostulate and reason a little upon the point itself, without giving reasonable or just offence to any; and especially, as I apprehend it to be a matter of moment, and what ought indeed to be maturely weighed, and well understood, if we would be ever able rightly to interpret that revelation which God has given us, or to set the doctrines of the new testament in a consistent, easy, and amiable light.

I would therefore fain learn, where we have any ground to believe what is called the *hypostatical union*, or a *duplicity of natures* in the person

of Christ;—or where it is that we are taught or instructed in any part of scripture, to speak of Jesus Christ, as many of our divines have done, sometimes as *God*, at other times as *man* (c). A mere *imaginary* distinction this;—such as only tends to embarrass and confound, but it is far from conveying to the mind any one clear, rational, or instructive idea concerning, either the one God, or the one Lord Jesus Christ. Our Saviour here prays, *glorify thou me with thy own self*. Does he then pray *to himself*? or pray to be *with himself*? Reason reluctates, the understanding recoils at such an unnatural perversion, such a *distortion* of ideas! (d) How can two such *disparates*

as

(c) Thus have the two widely distant ideas of *humanity* and *deity* (to the great dishonour of the Gospel) been often jumbled and confounded, in order to put the most favourable gloss and varnish upon a popular and trite opinion.—I scarcely need to observe, that this dextrous way of commenting upon scripture has appeared in many other instances, besides the foregoing, ver. 9. As to the day of judgment, (*Mark* xiii. 32.) it has been said, that, though Christ as *man* was ignorant of it, yet Christ as *God* knew it.—In like manner, on that text in *2 Cor.* viii. 9. that Christ was rich *as God*, but became poor, *as man*. Which, says bishop *Fowler*, is such a strain and force upon the words of scripture, that it looks like laying hold of any thing to help at a dead lift.

(d) The word *self* is always used as a personal exclusive term, and appropriated to one single individual person or agent;

as the Father's *self*, and Christ's *self*, be supposed to constitute one individual, one identical person? Or, how can we conceive, that two such different *natures*, as that of God and man, should be united in one and the same person, the man Christ Jesus?—In other words, how can he be supposed to subsist of himself, or to be all-sufficient and independant upon any, and yet to pray and

agent: So when Christ here uses the word *me*, it is plain, that he speaks of himself alone, and not of another.—And, in like manner, when he speaks of his Father and of himself together, under the personal and plural terms, *we* and *us*, the meaning and distinction is equally clear and obvious, *John* xvii. 21, 22. That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they all be one in *us*—that they may be one even as *we* are one. See also chap. xiv. 23.—“The word *person*, says Dr. *Waterland*, (though somewhat inconsistently with himself) is a plain English word, and should either not be used, or used in its true and proper sense.” Nor can I possibly form any, the least idea, of the word *person*, but when it is used to distinguish one being, one intelligent agent from another. It should be observed, that the word properly denotes an individual of the *human kind*, and was never applied to any other species of being till the latter end of the fourth century. But—it need not be said, how the meaning of this word, though exceeding plain and obvious in itself, has been perverted and misapplied by many writers in the trinitarian controversy. It is always an *inexplicable*, or an *equivocal term*, when applied to the *Deity*; or whenever it is made use of to support a *distinction of persons* in the divine nature, which is, in truth, an *inconceivable mystery*.

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intercede with God, both for himself and others, as here he does at large in this chapter? What an absurd supposition is this! Or, how is it possible for the human understanding to reconcile such clashing and discordant ideas!

Let learned and inquisitive men argue and debate this matter as long as they will, this must always pass with me for an *axiom*, or an indubitable self-evident truth, that Christ and his Father are *two beings*, two distinct *natures*. Nor can the most subtle refined reason or philosophy ever prove them to have one and the same essence, or to be equal in eternity, power and glory. No fancied inconceivable *modes* of union or subsistence betwixt the Father and the Son, which some have devised, can ever serve to explain or support this hypothesis, or tend to set it in any clear and satisfactory light. And, I am verily persuaded, that unless we endeavour to keep our ideas, in this point, clear and distinct, we shall be soon lost in a labyrinth of error and delusion.—That plain, simple, and *necessary* idea that we must all have of the *one God*, the universal parent of all beings, can never be altered or reversed by any of those nice and laboured distinctions, which men have studiously framed and invented, without any proper scriptural warrant or authority. And yet, how many are there, even at this day, who would screen and shelter this

this, as well as other incredible doctrines, under the venerable name of *mystery*; and, by this means, make them pass for current orthodoxy among the *vulgar*, and all the *untinking* part of mankind?

Now—this is, surely, something more than setting *revelation* at variance with *reason*. It is setting reason, the noblest faculty of the human soul at variance with itself. Nay, it does, in effect, absolutely disclaim and forbid all exercise and use of it upon a subject, wherein, I may venture to say, that nothing but *reason* can ever set us right, or lead us into the true and genuine sense of scripture.—But, alas! how much has true primitive Christianity suffered by the proud and conceited innovations of men? How often have the most irrational and absurd doctrines been palmed upon the world under the false colour and pretence of divine revelation? What a dishonour to God! what a reproach to reason! what a sacrilegious abuse of scripture! I have always thought, that reason and revelation are, in their genuine operation, tendency and design, one and the same thing; or, that both of them do perfectly concur and harmonise in the pursuit of one and the same great end,—even the acquisition and spread of religious truth, of substantial knowledge, virtue and happiness. The Gospel revelation is undoubtedly a great blessing

bleffing and benefit to mankind: But, fo far as *reason* is difcarded in the province of *religion*, the light of revelation is eclipsed. And then, no wonder if myftery and enthufiafm, ignorance and error, fhould prevail and triumph over the underftanding.

But to return,—was it not as *man*, and in that nature only, that Chrift here prays to God as his Father? And hath he not hereby taught us, even all his difciples and brethren, to pray in like manner to that fame almighty being, whom he exprefly ftiles *his God* and *our God*, *his Father* and *our Father*, John xx. 17.—Is not the doctrine of his ftrict and proper humanity from this, as well as many other places, very apparent to the underftanding and reafon of every man?—And, what can we then think of thofe prefcribed fystems or formulas, that require our belief of two diftinct natures in the perfon of Chrift? Is not this a futile groundlefs notion that has no manner of truth or folidity in it? a *theological figment*, as one calls it? or a device which is made to folve every thing, and folves nothing? And yet this imaginary and fond diftinction, is what many have ignorantly and weakly pleaded for, and have ever and anon had recourfe to it, as a ready folution for every feeming contradiction or difficulty they happen to meet with in the ftile and language of the
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sacred writers. But, in truth, they here make a distinction without a difference, and such a one too, as must necessarily overturn the common received doctrine of the trinity, though they may not seem to be aware of it.

Nothing is more evident to me, than that such a *complex*, such a *confused* and *intricate* notion, as many have formed concerning the person of Christ, as *God-man*, must necessarily render the true scripture doctrine in this article perfectly obscure and unintelligible. It disturbs and confounds all our ideas, and throws a thick mist and darkness over the human intellect.—It is indeed, as I hinted before, an affront and disgrace to the common sense and reason of mankind, as it perfectly jars, and is utterly incompatible with all our most natural, obvious, and just apprehensions of the Deity; he being a simple, spiritual, uncompounded being, and the one only living and true God. Nay, it confounds the only true and proper object of worship, and is an hindrance to all rational and true devotion. And —what shall I say more; it is an invincible obstruction and bar to all real improvement and progress in theological science, or in true scriptural knowledge.—But it should seem, in short, that this imaginary and mysterious union of two distinct natures in the man Christ Jesus, is the best and only support of a *lame hypothesis*. The scriptures

scriptures no where speak of any such thing; but it is plain, that they always speak of Christ as a *man*, a *true* and *real man* (e), though greatly distinguished from all other men by his greatly superior offices and endowment, by his transfiguration, his resurrection, ascension, and exaltation! And where is there any thing, in speaking thus of our Saviour, that does in the least derogate from the honour of his character, as the promised Messiah, the sent of God? or, that is in any wise inconsistent with the highest names and titles that are any where given him in the sacred writings?

To which let me add—that, as there is no real *foundation* for this supposed duplicity, or distinction of two natures in Christ Jesus, so there is no manner of *occasion* for it, as many have thought, in order to explain or clear up any one passage in the new testament: but it rather tends to darken or perplex what is sufficiently plain and clear in itself. And therefore, as neither reason nor revelation require us to believe plain inconsistencies, we are obliged, I think, to reject this opinion as a capital error in funda-

(e) To this we have the testimony of Christ himself, of Peter, Paul, and other inspired writers. (*John* viii. 40. ch. i. 30. *Acts*. ii. 22. ch. xvii. 31. *Rom.* v. 15. *1 Tim.* ii. 5.) to say nothing here of many other texts which must be necessarily supposed to *imply* his proper *humanity*.

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mentals.—And, in truth, it is hard to say how many erroneous and false notions have taken rise from this, as the true and only source of them; or, how many absurd opinions have been thus disguised and sanctified, and have hitherto passed current in the world under the delusive and specious name of *Christian orthodoxy*.

From this one passage in St. John's Gospel, or upon the prayer of Christ recorded in this chapter, we may easily collect these several plain and obvious truths: namely, that Jesus Christ was a true and real man, and was, as such, called forth to *his* peculiar distinct services and trials in life, as we are,—that, as a man, he here prayed to his Father in heaven, (as he did, upon all other occasions) with a filial confidence, that God was always ready to hear and answer him,—that, as a man, one in our nature, he has here taught us, and all his followers, the same lesson by his own *example*, as he had done before, by an express *precept*: after this manner pray ye, *Our Father who art in heaven, &c. Matt. vi. 9.*—And further, that the Father, to whom he here prayed, was the *only true God*, (verse 3d.) or, in other words, was as properly and truly *God*, as he himself was really and truly *man*, or one of the same nature, which is in us, and in all other men, sin only excepted, *Heb. ii. 17. iv. 15.*

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But, not to enlarge on these particulars, it shall suffice to say, that he consisted of a *human soul*, as well as a *human body*. And, as this is clearly manifest from the Gospel, and every book of the new testament, so it has been the general belief of the church in all ages. He was born into the world,—grew up from infancy and childhood to a state of manhood, as we do,—and had the several affections, passions and feelings, belonging to the human nature, in common with us, and all other men. This, I look upon as indisputably plain and undeniable. For what is man but a compound of body and spirit, or a rational and intellectual soul, informing and animating a human body? This gives us the true and proper idea of that *compositum*, we commonly call, a man.—And such was the man Christ Jesus. He had a true body and a reasonable soul. And, if this denominated him a person, a single individual person, what can be more inconsistent with this plain obvious truth, than the ungrounded supposition of his having two different natures; the one *before*, and the other *after* he was conceived and born of the Virgin? The nature of Christ, as that in all other men, was but *one*. Nor can I possibly conceive how either the *logos*, or an angel, could supply the place of a human soul in the person of Christ. As *their* natures are *specifically* distinct

distinct from that of man, there could be no such thing as an *essential* or *personal* union. And as I find it impossible to frame any the least *idea*, of such union, how is it possible for me to receive and embrace it as an object or article of my faith? (e)—Nay, it is clear to me, that the common supposition of two distinct natures in

(e) To judge of the truth of any proposition without *ideas*; or, in other words, to believe what I find to be *incredible* is no less difficult, than to perform what is *impossible*, or utterly *impracticable*. What notion or idea can we possibly have of a *revelation*? Or, indeed, what notion at all of *religion*, if we expell reason out of the province of faith? Religion is, in every view of it, a most reasonable service; it has been justly stiled the *perfection of man*. And what else is *Christianity*, if rightly understood, but the *perfection of all religion*. The nature of man, however degenerate, is not wholly destitute of all its original endowments, or of all moral and divine principles. And the *reason* of man, how carnal and corrupt a thing soever some have represented it, must after all, be a *standing*, an *invariable*, and *constant* rule of judging, not only concerning the *authenticity* and *truth* of any pretended revelation from heaven, but also of the true sense and meaning of its particular doctrines. Upon any other principle a cloud of darkness must necessarily overspread the Gospel history, and the inspired writings of the new testament.—Most certainly reason has its use and authority in judging of principles peculiar to revelation. It is by our reason that we ought to admit of any thing, as *authentic* or *true*, which offers itself under that title. And to deny this principle, is to render revelation uncertain in its signification, and to open a direct way to all the extravagance of enthusiasm.

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Christ, must as necessarily destroy the doctrine of his true and proper *Deity*, as the supposition of two or more different persons in the one God must destroy the doctrine of the *unity*. They are both equally repugnant to truth and reason, as well as to the plain and intelligible doctrine of our Saviour and his apostles. *One, or either,* of these suppositions must necessarily destroy the other.

And, if we pursue this reasoning a little further, it may, I think, be demonstrated from the nature and reason of things, that, as no man can be *God*, in the *true* sense, or *usual* acceptance of that term, so neither is it possible for God to become a *man*, according to the use we make of this word in our common and ordinary speech. For, as to *man*, he is made up of two finite parts, body and soul, and cannot therefore be finite and infinite at once. And as to *God*, what was once infinite, or omnipresent, cannot become finite, or confined to any limited finite part of space, and therefore cannot animate a human body (*f*).—I acknowledge, indeed, that the

(*f*) The operation or influence of Deity may be considered, as *acting upon* the *human* frame and faculties, or upon any *material system*, which yet he cannot be properly and strictly said to *inform* or *animate*.—We none of us know indeed, *how*, or in what imperceptible ways the supreme being

the union of the Son with the Father may be happily and easily explained, in the moral and figurative sense of that word; *i. e.* they are virtually, or in effect one, as they are perfectly united in harmony and consent,—in acting upon the same principle, LOVE,—and in carrying on one great and benevolent design in the moral world. And, as to all *metaphysical abstruse* terms of distinction and explication, they can avail nothing towards setting the matter in any other light. Nay, they are so far from clearing our conceptions, or facilitating our enquiries upon this subject, that they even tend to subvert, and quite erase all our most obvious and primary ideas.

I am verily persuaded, upon the whole, that, to entertain right and consistent notions of the nature and constitution of our Saviour's *person*, or of his true and proper *humanity*, is a most material point in the system of theology, v. 9. This will best explain whatever is said of him,—relative to his appearance and manifestation in the world, as the promised Messiah,—to his miracu-

being may act upon *mind* or *matter*. This is above all human finite comprehension. But thus much is clear,—and it may suffice to say, that the *soul of man* may, by a free and voluntary act or exertion of its own, put a ball, a watch, or a clock into motion, which yet it *does not*, *cannot* be said to *animate*, as the soul does its own proper body.

lous birth and ministry, and all those offices to which he was appointed, as the Restorer and Saviour of the human race.—This will give us the truest idea of his humiliation, of his temptations, sufferings, and death; of his admirable and perfect example of obedience and resignation; of his resurrection from the dead; of his priesthood and intercession; and of that high dignity, power and dominion, to which he is advanced at the right hand of God.—It is, I say, upon this principle, and upon no other, that we can fairly account for these, and the like historical facts. It perfectly well accords, in all respects, with every thing that the scripture revelation hath any where taught us concerning him. And hence it is, that I derive my most exalted idea of his true and proper character, as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world.

And, let no one raise any objection here; or say, that I mean to detract or derogate, in the least, from the highest honours and titles that are any where given him in the sacred writings. These every where tend to impress our minds with the most venerable and worthy sentiments of this great and extraordinary person: and I would always pay a proper and due regard to scripture testimony, and consequently all due reverence to the *man Christ Jesus*, as one that sustained

tained the highest and fairest character that ever appeared on the theatre of this world. I look upon him as a truly divine person, and the most virtuous of the human race; as one who was appointed by God to be the Redeemer, Law-giver and Judge of mankind; and is now exalted, in reward of his voluntary obedience unto death, to a state and place of the highest dominion and glory, as Lord of angels and men, and of all created beings both in heaven and on earth.— And it ought not, surely, to offend any, when I say, that this same Jesus, thus highly honoured and exalted was a *man*. He was a partaker of flesh and blood in like manner as we are; and, as such, he was subject to infirmities temptations and trials, like other men. Though he was not born in the *ordinary* way of generation, yet he was *made of a woman*, like one of us; and his usual stile, *Jesus of Nazareth*, by which he was distinguished from other men in the days of his flesh, he did not disdain to own, even in his state of exaltation. *Acts* ii. 22. where he is called, *a man approved of God*.

But let none, I say, imagine or surmise from hence, that I intend to lessen or depreciate our Saviour's character by making him no more than a *mere man*. This, I acknowledge might be objected to, as a low and diminutive expression.

But the solution is easy : and it may suffice to say,—that, if he was more than a *common* and *ordinary* man, (as all must allow, and scriptures every where represent him) he was nevertheless a *true* and *real* man (*g*). This then is a weak and frivolous objection, and must be very injudiciously urged by any who profess to make the scriptures the standard of their faith. It cannot surely be thought, when I speak of the *humanity* of Christ, that I mean to exclude or deny his true and proper *Divinity*, as the promised *Messiah* (*b*). No, as such, he was a truly *divine* person, and bore an extraordinary divine character and commission, being chosen and appointed by God, in an eminent sense to every part of his peculiar office and ministry.

With respect to heavenly gifts and divine abilities, as well as in moral worth and excellence,

(*g*) So he was esteemed by the ancient Fathers.—*Homo verus & firmus*, says Irenæus, advers. Hæres. lib. 5—and this is shewn to have been the opinion of Epiphanius, Justin, Martyr, St. Jerome, &c. They all maintained his true and proper humanity.—And, as to the *Jews*, they had no notion of their Messiah's being any more than a *man*. See *Whitby* on Rom. ix. 5. as also Dr. *Jortin's* Differ. on the Christian Religion, p. 17. 2d Edit. See Heb. ii. 11. both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, all of one, *i. e.* of one nature.

(*b*) On this see the True doctrine of the New Testament concerning Jesus Christ, p. 338. 2d edit.

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he stood in the highest esteem and favour with God, and was superior to all the children of men, having the singular extraordinary presence of God with him, as no other man ever had. —It has been observed by a judicious and learned writer, that by Christ, or Messiah, the Jewish people always meant one who had the spirit without measure, or in a greater measure than any of the other prophets,—a man endowed from above with power, wisdom and understanding, superior to all others,—that he knew the whole council and will of God concerning the salvation of men; spake the words of God with full authority; and wrought miracles of all kinds, and at all times, whenever he pleased; that he had the knowledge of all things, even the thoughts and characters of men, of things at a distance, and things to come: or, as the same respectable writer speaks elsewhere, (upon comparing the scripture testimonies concerning him) “from all which it appears, that Jesus is a man appointed, anointed, beloved, honoured and exalted by God above all other beings. See Letter on the Logos, p. 39.—Such was the greatness, the transcendent greatness of the man Christ Jesus:—And yet something further must be added, that tends very much to illustrate and heighten his character.

It is remarkable, v. 9. and well worthy of observation, that our Saviour did not assume or

affect, but rather discountenance and forbid, all worldly honours and titles; and that he more usually and frequently stiled himself the *son of man*, a form of speech, as I take it, chiefly and for the most part, intended to denote, one of a mean and humble rank, or low condition. He never once appropriated any divine perfection to himself, but he every where ascribed his supernatural discernment, his all penetrating knowledge, his astonishing wisdom and power to the Father. He sometimes, indeed, acknowledged, or at least, did not disown and reject that higher title, the *son of God*, (i) or Messias, (*Mark* xiv. 61, 62. *John* iv. 25, 26. chap. ix. 35, 36.) but he never stiled himself *God*. He did not covet or aspire to any high title or prerogative: for, though he appeared in the *form of God*, or acted like a God in many respects, whilst in this world, yet it is certain, at the same time, that, for the most part, he took upon him the *form of a servant*. And he acted, indeed, *as such*, all along, throughout all his ministrations, even as a servant to his Father who sent him, and did never once attempt in any instance to make himself *equal* with God. He never said, either directly or indirectly

(i) How these two titles, the *son of man*, and the *son of God*, do perfectly agree, when ascribed to one and the self same person, Jesus Christ, see Dr. Lardner's Sermons, the sixth and seventh in vol. II.

either to his friends or to his foes, or to any whom he taught in the days of his public ministry, that he was *God*, much less, the *one God*; but, on the contrary, he guarded them, as much as possible, against their believing him to be so; as might be shewn in many instances. See *John* x. 30. which he explains, ver. 36.

It is likewise to be observed, that whenever this title of *God* was given him by others, *after his resurrection*, it is only to be understood in a restrained and limited sense, or as a word of *office*, to denote that subordinate power and dominion which God had given him, as the *son of man* (k). Neither St. Paul, St. Thomas, nor the

(k) If the *Head of Christ* is *God*, [so says the apostle, 1 Cor. ii. 3. ch. iii. 23.] then our Saviour's headship or dominion could be only subordinate or *acquired*. Thus the word *God*, as Dr. Clarke and others have observed, is often used in scripture as a word of *office*, in a relative sense, to signify dominion, dignity, and government. The word *Elohim* was used in like manner among the Jews.—Nor is the word, *God*, ever used in any other sense, when applied to the Messiah, either in the Old or New Testament. Thus I understand the language and stile of the evangelic prophet Isaiah, ch. ix. 6, 7. where he makes use of these two grand magnificent titles amongst others, the *mighty God*, the *everlasting Father*; importing that, when the holy *child*, or *son*, (as he is there called) that is, *Jesus* should appear in the end of the world, or at the end of the patriarchal and Jewish ages; he was to sway a mighty and universal scepter, and have the rule and authority given him, as *prince*
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the other apostles, did believe that he was God in any other sense. And indeed it should seem, that upon this account *chiefly*, (viz. his being raised from the dead to a state of honour and power) he was *eminently* stiled the *Son of God*. And the term *God*, when, or wherever applied to *Jesus Christ*, cannot in strictness, or in truth, bear any *other*, or any *higher* construction. The words of St. PAUL, to this purpose, are very strong and emphatical, Rom. i. 3, 4. *Jesus Christ*, says he, was declared (*i. e.* with clear abundant evidence and demonstration) to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from

of the kings of the earth.—And that he was also to be the *everlasting Father*, *i. e.* the author and minister of a new dispensation, or a kingdom of truth, righteousness, and peace, that should last for ever. Thus was God pleased all along, and from the first ages, to distinguish the man *Christ Jesus*, who, at his resurrection from the dead, received a kingdom, and was constituted Lord of the dead and the living, of the visible and invisible worlds. He was appointed and empowered by his Father to conduct and carry on the various scenes of providence to their utmost completion.

N. B. Some indeed have thought that this passage in Isaiah, ch. ix. 6, 7. cannot be a prophecy of Christ, because it speaks of a prince actually born at that time; and also, that the text may be probably understood of *Hezekiah*—“Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; “the wonderful counsellor, the mighty God shall name “him the peaceable prince,—for so the Hebrew runs.” See *A brief History of Unitarians*, A. D. 1691, pages 19, 20.

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the dead. And the same apostle tells us elsewhere, that God, his Father, highly exalted him, in reward of his obedience unto death, and gave him a character and title above all others, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess, that he is Lord; or acknowledge and submit to him, as the appointed governor of all created beings both in heaven and earth, Phil. ii. 9, 10. And the words of ST. PETER likewise, in his nervous and excellent address to the Jews, are no less remarkable, Acts ii. 32—6. This Jesus hath God raised up—therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ. And again, ch. v. 31. Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour. That is, he then, [upon his resurrection] took possession of his kingdom. His Godhead and rule did then commence; or he was then made Lord of all to the glory of God the Father. He was then invested with power and dominion over all flesh, and constituted the judge of the world.

And this was the *greatest* and *last* testimony concerning himself, to which our SAVIOUR any where refers: he often making mention of this signal event to the Jews; or, at least, hinting at it under one or other plain and obvious simile, as a *proof*, or a most clear and convincing *sign*,
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that he was indeed the person he pretended to be, and one whom God would honour, by raising him from the dead to the right hand of power and majesty. (Mat. xii. 38. John ii. 18, 19. ch. iii. 14. and other places.)

Our Saviour indeed had been declared to be the Son of God *before*, and whilst he lived and conversed here on earth. He was anointed or endowed with many extraordinary gifts and abilities, and gave the strongest, clearest proof of his divine embassy; but he did not receive a plenary power, or full commission, till after his resurrection and ascension, when he poured out upon his apostles, and others, the promised gifts of the holy Ghost. (Acts i. 4, 5. ch. ii. 4. ch. xiii. 33. Heb. v. 5.) It was then, as he himself tells us, that *all power* was given him in heaven and in earth, (Mat. xxviii. 18.) Though he was crucified through weakness, [or through the *appearance* of weakness] as the apostle speaks, yet he now liveth by the power of God, (2 Cor. xiii. 4.) that is, he was, through the common infirmities of human nature, liable to suffering, and actually suffered death on the cross; but by the almighty quickening power of God, he was raised to life again, and advanced to a state of permanent unfading honour and felicity in the kingdom of his Father. Though he appeared and shone forth in this world as a person divinely glorious,

glorious, and acted as a God in exerting those miraculous powers which God had given him; yet his divine and godlike character was more illustriously displayed in consequence of his resurrection and exaltation at the right hand of God. His Father then gave him dominion and glory, or a name above every name.

And this is all that I can understand by his *Godhead*, even his *lordship* and *dominion*: or, he was God no otherwise than by his superiority to all creatures. And, in this sense, his *Godhead* is not to be disputed, his Father having now made him head over all, or king and governor of the church universal; an office and honour that he will always maintain and support, as the great arbiter of life and death to all the ages and generations of mankind, as they successively pass through their respective stages of trial and mortality. And I am pretty confident, that all those who speak of our Saviour's Godhead in any other sense can have no clear or consistent ideas.— It was, I say, upon his resurrection, or exaltation, that an extensive power and dominion was given him; or he was then made head over all things for the peculiar benefit of his church and people; and all things were delivered into his hands, as he himself and his inspired apostles have assured us, (See John iii. 35. ch. v. 21, 22. Phil. ii. 9, 10. Heb. i. 2.)

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But notwithstanding his advancement to this state of high dignity, power and dominion, it does not appear from any one text in the New Testament, that he was *essentially* and truly *God*, or more than a *man*, though, as I said before, greatly distinguished and highly honoured above all other men. And this was the highest notion that the Jews, and the disciples, ever had of Christ's being called the *Son of God*, and the king of Israel, even a Deliverer, a Saviour and Ruler; it being the redemption of Israel which they expected under the stile and character of *Messiah*. (John i. 49. (1) There are indeed some very pious

(1) The *priests*, the *elders*, and the whole *council of the Jews*, when they sought witness against Jesus to put him to death, (Mat. xxvi. 59.) did not attempt to prove before *Pontius Pilate*, that he ever said he was the son of God, or equal to him. All they charged him with, was, his endeavouring to make the people believe, that he was the Christ, the *Son of the blessed*, or the *chosen of God*. (Mat. xxvi. 63. Mark xiv. 61. Luke xxiii. 35.) And what they reviled him for when he hung upon the cross was, that he who pretended to be the man who was anointed by God to be the Saviour of the world, could not so much as save himself, or come down from the cross and shew himself to be their king. (Mat. xxvii. 41, 42, 43.) — Notwithstanding the malicious insinuation of the Jews, (who it seems charged him with an impious arrogance in making himself God, John x. 31.) our blessed Lord was so far from asserting any such thing, or teaching his *disciples* any such doctrine, that, on the contrary, he would not leave them without putting them

pious persons who, after all that has been said, would still maintain that our Lord was a compound being [*Θεανδρῶτος*] or *God-man* in one person. But, I would ask, where the text, or texts are to be found, that assert or speak of two intelligent natures in the person of Christ? or where it is that the language of scripture supposes or implies any such thing? Jesus Christ was a single intelligent agent; and being one intelligent agent is sufficient to account for every thing that is any where said concerning him, either during

them in mind that God was *his* God as well as theirs, (John xx. 17.)—And if he himself never once pretended to make himself *God*, or *equal* with God, why should any of his professed friends and followers bring, in effect, a *like charge* against him? A certain writer, who signs himself *Philaltes*, seems to argue here very justly; “If, says he, amongst that vast number of Jews who resorted to him in the synagogue and in the temple, (See John xviii. 21, 22.) who had heard and known what doctrine he taught his disciples, and who wanted to prove him a *blasphemer*, not one charges him with ever having *heard him* say to his disciples, that he was *God*, is not that a plain proof that he never said it? and if he never said it, pray, upon what authority do we believe him to be so? If he never taught any such doctrine to his disciples, then they had *no commission* from him to teach it; and if they had no commission from him to teach it, then neither they nor his apostles ever taught it; and if they never *taught* it, and we yet *believe* it, then we must own, that we do not believe it because it was *their* doctrine, but because it is agreeable to the tradition and rudiments of our church.”

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his abode on earth, or after his ascension into heaven, when he was exalted to kingly power and government. Which would lead me to consider more particularly, some of those august honours and titles which he sustained after his resurrection from the dead. But this must be considered in a second part, as the subject of another letter.

P A R T II.

*On the Style and Appellation given to
our Saviour before and after his
Resurrection: Or, his Personal
Character further considered.*

HAVING, in the former part, considered Christ as a man, a prophet of the greatest name and character, and eminently raised up by God to be the Saviour of mankind, I now proceed to observe further, that under every office and title which he sustained, and through every change of condition that he underwent, the sacred writings consider and speak of him as a man, or one who partook of our nature *only*. (See Acts xvii. 31. Heb. x. 12. 1 Tim. ii. 5.) The design of the *Evangelists* in their writings, was chiefly to give us the history of his birth, life, and ministry here on earth; or of what passed from the time of his first appearance in the world

to the time of his suffering and death; but the *apostles*, in their writings, more particularly speak of him in his subsequent state, when he entered upon kingly rule and government. And accordingly they assert his resurrection from the dead, &c. to be a confirmation or seal to the truth of those excellent doctrines which he taught during his public ministry. And I cannot but think, that the *manner* and *style* in which all the sacred writers speak of him, both before and after his resurrection, is worthy of notice, and a matter of no small importance, as it shews in what light and consistency of character, we, his professed disciples, should always learn to think and speak of him, namely, as a man who was highly *approved of God*, and greatly honoured and rewarded by him. (Acts ii. 22, 36. ch. x. 38. 40. and ch. v. 31.)

And now, if we view some of the peculiar characters and titles, which were either given him by the evangelists during his residence on earth, or afterwards by his apostles when he was risen, exalted, and glorified, it may help not only to strengthen and confirm what has been said already, but also to throw, at the same time, the greatest lustre and highest honour upon our Saviour's character. Amongst many others that might be mentioned, the following may answer my present purpose, and especially as I apprehend

hence that they have been often mistaken or misapplied. And here I shall advert to those passages, in particular, where our Saviour is styled the *son of God*, his *well beloved*, and *only begotten son*; and then to those where he is called the *first begotten*, or *first born from the dead*, and the *first born of every creature*.

As to those titles, the *son of God*, &c. which were chiefly given or applied to him whilst here on earth, they are far from importing that he was of the same nature, essence, or substance with God; though this is what some of the ancient writers, as *Tertullian*, *Novatian*, and others have asserted; very weakly arguing, that because every *son of man* is of the nature of the man whose son he is, or one of the same *kind*, so the very reason of the thing, say they, requires us to believe *him* to be really and truly *God* who is *from God*, or hath God for his Father: not considering, that the nature of the subject spoken of, should always direct us what sense we are to put upon scripture language: for, many words, when applied to subjects of a *different kind*, must have *different meanings*. To instance only in two words, *darkness* and *light*. In how different a sense are they used by *Moses*, when he is speaking of the creation of this *material* world, from what they are used by saint *John* and other writers, when applied to the human

soul or intellect? (See Eph. v. 8.) So it is in the present case. The idea of *son*, when applied to *man*, must be very different from what it is, when applied to *God*. When applied to *man*, it must necessarily imply a communication of nature, because the nature of man is *communicable*: but it cannot import a like communication when applied to *God*, because his nature or essence is *incommunicable*.

From hence it will follow, that this phrase, the son of God, when applied to the man Christ Jesus, can only be understood in a *moral* and *figurative* sense, even as the words light and darkness are in the text now mentioned. In other words, it does not signify a communication of *substance* or *essence*, but agreeably to the scripture mode and dialect, the communication of a *moral temper, spirit* and *disposition*. And to this purpose our Saviour, in that remarkable conversation which he held with the Jews, in the 8th chapter of John, readily admits that they were the *natural* seed of Abraham, ver. 37; but, at the same time, strongly denies that they were his *true genuine* sons, because they were destitute of the good *temper* and *disposition* of Abraham; and were rather to be accounted children of the *Devil*, as they appeared to be actuated and governed by a worldly, persecuting, and malignant spirit. See that passage at large, from the thirty-eighth,

eighth, to the forty-fourth verſe, compared with the firſt epiſtle of John, chap. v. 18, 19.

Now, on the other hand, the ſons of God are good men; ſuch as are beloved of God and dear to him, as children who bear his moral image and reſemblance. Such was the man Chriſt Jeſus, in a conſpicuous and eminent ſenſe. Or we thus ſee in what ſenſe he was peculiarly ſtyled the *ſon of God*; meaning hereby, a perſon of ſuperior moral worth and excellence. And, by the way, we are thus able to answer, with clear and ſatisfactory evidence, that queſtion which he put to the Pharifees, *Matt.* xxii. 42. What think ye of Chriſt? Whoſe ſon is he? or that which he put to his diſciples, whom ſay ye, that I, the *ſon of man* am? *Matt.* xvi. 13, 15.—The true and ſhort answer, is, that he was the *Meſſiah*, that great illuſtrious prophet who was to come into the world, in purſuance of ancient prophecy. It is ſpoken of him as a *man*, (nor could any thing truly more great be ſaid of him) that he was a *prophet mighty in deed and in word*!—that he exhibited to the world, or to all the people of Judea, the moſt amazing miracles, and delivered the moſt ſublime and heavenly doctrines.—“No man can do theſe miracles that thou doeſt, except God be with him?” was the teſtimony of *Nicodemus*, a ruler of the Jews, *John* iii. 2.—And, “never man ſpake like this
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man, was the testimony of the *Jewish officers* who were sent to apprehend him; and their testimony was true. They spake of him as a real man, and a teacher who was of an eminent and distinguished character, *John* vii. 46.—And what Christ himself says of his messenger or herald, *John the baptist*, might with much greater truth be applied to himself, that he was *more than a prophet*, i. e. greatly superior in dignity and office to any prophet that ever appeared before him.—So that this title, the *son of God*, can be applicable to our Saviour no otherwise than, as a *man*, or, one of our nature.

Nor can any thing more be meant or intended, when he is stiled God's *well beloved son*, and the *only begotten of the Father*. In scripture language, they are phrases of like import. *Only begotten* very naturally and strongly expresses an object of the fondest and tenderest affection. Accordingly we are told, that Jesus demonstrated himself to John and others who beheld his glory, to be the only begotten, or the distinguished favourite of heaven, *John* i. 14, 18. —We read that the prophet *Daniel* was a man *greatly beloved*,—a character that may be applied with the greatest propriety and emphasis to the man Christ Jesus, of whom this same prophet speaks under the signal appropriate stile of *Messiah the prince*, or chief ruler, chap.

ix. 25. chap. x. 11, 19.—Certain it is, that Jesus was a man greatly beloved of the Father who sent him, and who upheld and supported him, as one that was chosen and dear to him, beyond all the rest of the children of men. To which I may add, that the title or testimony of *well beloved son*, which was given him at his baptism, or inauguration, was afterwards confirmed by many signs and miracles in the course of his ministry; but, above all, as I said before, by his resurrection from the dead, and his high advancement to a state of imperial honour and dignity, where he now sits enthroned at his Father's right hand. Then it was that he received from God the Father honour and glory in the most sublime and eminent sense, and every signal testimony before given him "in the days of his flesh, was then fully and completely ratified.

Which leads me to remark somewhat further, concerning the characters and epithets that were more particularly given him after his resurrection: as for instance, the *first begotten*, or the *first born from the dead*, and the *first born of every creature*: which phrases, as I conceive, have no reference at all to any eternal, or other state of existence prior to his nativity; but rather, that they signify the same as *birth-right*, *heirship*, or a *right of inheritance*, in consequence of his resurrection from the dead, when he inherited

the highest honours and titles, and entered on the possession of his heavenly Kingdom. And we Christians are now called to contemplate the man Christ Jesus, as the appointed Lord and heir of all things; and, as such, to pay all due honour and worship to him.

The words *first begotten*, and *first born* cannot, I think, be fairly interpreted, or understood, in the sense above mentioned, I mean, as referring to any prior state of existence, it being very plain, (as they stand in the text, or in the context) that they *directly* and *solely* refer to his resurrection: for he *then*, (or in that *very instance*, as it was a signal act of the divine power) was manifested to be the son of God, or the well-beloved, the only begotten of the Father.—And, as a man who stood in the highest favour with God, he had then a new and approved title given him to headship and dominion over all creatures. He then assumed the reins of government, and was constituted Lord both of the dead and the living. So I understand, nor can I any otherwise interpret those words, in Col. i. 15, where he is stiled, the *first born of every creature*; which seemed to be explained in the 18th verse, where he is called the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might “have the pre-eminence.”—And this, I apprehend, will give us the true sense of the phrase,

phrase, *namely*, that Jesus was the first-born of every creature, as he was, upon his resurrection from the dead, made Lord and head of the whole creation, or, the Lord and heir of all things! having the *pre-eminence*, or the rule and government of all created beings put into his hands.

And we may here observe, by the way, that our Saviour is every where, after his resurrection, spoken of under such high and magnificent titles, as do greatly tend to illustrate and confirm this sentiment; for it was then, but not before, that he was created Lord, and head of all principality and power, *Col. ii. 10.*—And this indeed is agreeable to what was foretold of him before his conception, that he should be great, and be called the son of the highest, and that of his kingdom there should be no end, *Luke i. 31.*—Accordingly, when he came into the world he was anointed with the holy Ghost and with power, and was hereby greatly distinguished and highly honoured above his brethren. As he sustained the most worthy and amiable character of God's well-beloved son, so he was distinguished as such by the special extraordinary presence and power of God with him.—And when he rose from the dead, being then constituted the one Lord, his divinity and glory was most illustrious. He was then made higher than

than the kings of the earth, higher than all the princes and potentates of this world, being invested with royal dignity and dominion; angels, authorities, and powers, things in heaven and things on earth, being all put in subjection under him: for we are expressly told, that he was not only the first who should rise from the dead to a state of absolute immortality; (*i. e.* never more to die), *Acts* xiii. 34. and xxvi. 23.) but also that to this very end he rose again and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living; or obtain an universal sovereignty and dominion, *Rom.* xiv. 9.—To which I might add, that, as his kingdom then *began*, so it was soon after manifested by the many signal miraculous gifts and powers which accompanied the apostles and first preachers of Christianity.

But what we are, in a more particular manner, to notice and observe here, is, that Christ, by his resurrection from the dead, became the author of a *new*, that is, of a *moral* and *spiritual* creation; by which figure, the state of things under the gospel is often described and spoken of in the New Testament (*m*). So I understand that

(*m*) This is the sense that *Grotius*, *Calvin*, and *Mr. Locke*, and many others, even *Athanasius* himself, have put upon the word *created* in that passage, *Eph.* iii. 9. and in *Col.* i. 15, 16.—And it has been observed that the original word for

that passage in the revelations, chap. iii. 14. where our Saviour is stiled the *beginning of the creation of God*; that is, of that new creation

for *make, create, &c.* in the three learned languages, and especially the Hebrew word *Bara*, are often used to signify a moral and metaphorical creation. It is also observable, that the Hebrew language being destitute of compounded verbs, the words *made* and *created* are equivalent with *made a-new* or *created a-new*, and that the word in the original signifies, not only to bring into being, but to put a nation or people into a better state, or into a new and happier condition, Isa. xliii. 9. or to produce some new or surprising event, Numb. xvi. 30. See *Dodder Taylor's Hebrew Concordance*.—And the same learned and critical writer has made an observation similar to this in explaining the language and stile of the New Testament. The scriptural notion of a Father, says he, is one that confers a happy state, or an *exalted* state of existence in opposition to that which is low or wretched: being born, is being raised to it; and both terms have relation to any change of state *for the better*.—The word regeneration seems to be used in this moral figurative sense, Mat. xix. 28.—And agreeable to this, good men are said to be the sons of God, as they are the sons of the resurrection, or do attain a resurrection to eternal life, Luke xx. 36.—And with regard to this new generation or begetting, our Lord is stiled the first-born from the dead, Col. i. 18. or he was born by *his resurrection*, and thereby ascertained to be the son of God in the highest and most distinguished sense, by God's raising him on the third day to the glory of his exalted state. See Taylor's key to the apostolic writings, [15] and his note on Rom. i. 4. as also Patrobas's judicious remarks upon this subject in the Theological Repository, vol. II. p. 85.

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which God made by him, as his appointed authorised minister and agent; and over which he has given him the rule and dominion. Jesus was the first and chief minister of life and salvation to all his spiritual seed. He is therefore styled the head of the Christian church, Col. i. 18.—the first begotten of the dead, Rev. i. 5.—and the first born among many brethren, Rom. viii. 24, 29. And so I understand those expressions, (Heb. i. 5, 6.) not of our Saviour's coming into the world at his *nativity*, but of his entering into glory, and taking possession of the kingdom after his resurrection.—Our blessed Lord was, if I may so express it, BORN by his resurrection from the tomb or sepulchre, on the third day, to all his high honours and preferments in the heavenly world: and thus ascertained to be the son of God in the highest and most distinguished sense (*n*). He was then made president

(*n*) It has been observed to this purpose, that the *natales*, or birth days of the Roman emperors signified not only their *natural* birth days, but likewise their *civil* birth days, or the time of their inauguration into the empire, which was called *natalis imperii*.—And such was the day of our Saviour's *resurrection*, upon which he received his investiture into that sovereignty which was the joy set before him under his sufferings and death, Phil. ii. 6.—11.—He is said to have been begotten or born, on the day that he arose from the dead: then was the decree declared, or that prophecy fulfilled,

sident or chief over the household and family of God, the chief in point of *precedence* and *pre-eminence*, or the head of all true Christians whom he is pleased to call, *his brethren*.

And such indeed are all sincerely virtuous and good men. They are the brethren of Christ; *i. e.* they are like to Jesus the son of God, and bear the image of the Father who sent him: for the Christian name is as nothing without the divine nature; and herein it is that all true real Christians resemble their Lord and master. Being renewed in the spirit of their minds, they walk in newness of life: or, righteousness and true holiness are what form their proper character and complexion. They are sanctified through the truth, or the sacred influence of the Christian

fulfilled, Psa. ii. 7. comp. Heb. i. 5.—Our Saviour was then solemnly invested with the *regalia*, and put in possession of universal empire. The angels were commanded to worship him as their Lord, and all power was put into his hands both in heaven, (his imperial city where he reigns with the Father) and in earth (the affairs of which he directs for the advantage and happiness of his church and people.) Christ was *first* born in a poor and low condition, and to a life of sorrow and suffering; his *second* birth was to honour and immortality, and a kingdom that ruleth over all: And in respect of both these, his *first* and *second* birth, he is in scripture stiled the Son of God. Upon this see an excellent discourse by Mr. Henry Grove, on the Evidences of our Saviour's Resurrection.

doctrine,

doctrine, John xvii. 17. In other words, they are passed from death to life,—to a new, a heavenly and divine life, which is described in scripture under the metaphor of a resurrection.

For, “besides the resurrection of the body, which they expect hereafter, there is, as one observes, a change, a very great change that passes upon them in this life; or to speak strictly, the human nature in them is exalted into a conformity to the divine. They are the brethren of Christ, not merely as descended from the same common Father of mankind, but as they are the sons of God by adoption, or inheritance, and partake of a new and divine nature. Our Saviour at his birth partook of their *flesh*, by means of which he became related to all the sons of men; and in their regeneration he makes them to partake of his *spirit*, by virtue of which, the relation before common, becomes special and appropriate.

Or, to change the metaphor, Christ is as the head of the *body natural*, that is, the Saviour and the guardian of it. (Eph. v. 23, 24.) So says the apostle, “God hath made him to be “head over all things to the church, which is “his body, the fulness of him, (i. e. of God “the Father) who filleth all in all.” Eph. i. 22, 23.—And hence it is, that Christ and true Christians are said to be filled with all the fulness of
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of God, Col. i. 19. Eph. viii. 19. (o). That is, the life, the health, the vigour of the whole system is from that one God who filleth all in all. Accordingly we read that all things are of God—and that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, 2 Cor. v. 18, 19. and that Christ is of God made unto us wisdom and righteousness, &c. 2 Cor. i. 30.—Thus do the scriptures every where lead us to distinguish betwixt God the Father and his son Jesus Christ, and to ascribe every thing in the œconomy of our redemption to God as the primary author and the first cause. The spirit, the life and efficacy of the whole dispensation is owing to him who worketh all in all, 1 Cor. xii. 6. And we are to

(o) Whatever fulness our Saviour possessed, it pleased the Father that all that fulness should dwell in him, Col. i. 9. Hence it is evident this fulness is derived from another, and therefore proves the possessor of it inferior to the Father who communicated it; so that, unless the same thing can prove one person both equal and inferior to another, this fulness of the Godhead can never prove Christ equal to, much less the same being with the Father, who alone is God.—The fulness of the *Godhead*, Col. ii. 9. is of like import with all the fulness of God, Eph. iii. 19. And therefore this latter, which all believing Christians may be filled with, will prove them to be God, as strongly as the former, which it pleased the Father should dwell in Christ, proves his supreme Godhead. But the one is absurd, therefore the other is so too. See an Essay towards a Demonstration of the Scripture Trinity, p. 151.

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ascribe it solely to his mercy and benevolence that we are now favoured with the privileges and blessings of the Messiah's kingdom and government.

Now these incidental thoughts (which may be supposed a digression) will, I hope, be excused, as they tend to set the scripture phraseology concerning Christ in a just light, and will naturally lead us into the true sense of the apostle, in those passages to which I have had a more immediate reference, particularly in Col. i. 15. where he calls our Saviour the *first born of every creature*. Upon which text I would make a further remark, namely, that there are many interpreters of note, who will not allow that the word, *πρωτότοκος*, the first born, in this place denotes Christ's eternal generation, or any state of prior existence, but that it signifies the same as *Lord*, or a person in power who had the *prerogative* of the first-born, or dominion over all his brethren; the first born in Jewish families having several peculiar honours and privileges above their brethren.

Many of the Greek fathers have yet given us this comment upon the text, *viz.* "begotten before the whole creation." And to the like sense many other writers of later date: as if Christ was the first of all created beings, the very first of them that *existed*, or the first that God ever *made*
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or *produced*. Thus a modern author relates this and other similar texts: "This illustrious personage Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible supreme, the first being the Deity formed." and elsewhere, Rev. xiii. 14. He is the true and faithful witness, "the very first being whom the Deity called into existence." [See a liberal translation, &c.]—But this seems to me *gratis dictum*, there being no just, no probable foundation for any such opinion, either in reason or scripture; neither in this text or in any other. The reader may here very properly consult H. Grotius, Dr. Hammond's Paraphrase, and Le Clerc's Supplement to it.

But what, I own, has given me most satisfaction, is a thought that has been suggested to me by the late Dr. *William Harris*, in his discourses on the Messiah, described in Isaiah ix. 6. where he observes that the word *πρωτότοκος*, by a change in the accent, is sometimes used by profane writers, not in a *passive* but in an *active* sense, referring in the margin to an ancient writer, *Isidori Pelusiota*, lib. 3. epist. 30. and thus by a small alteration some would read the original word, *πρωτοτόκος*, putting the accent upon the *penultima*, and would accordingly render it, not the first-born but the *beginner*, or the first *bringer-forth*, the immediate cause or the first begetter of all things; that is, of all things

in the *new creation*. This seems to me most agreeable to the scope and connexion of the place, and will very well accord with the following verses, (16, 17, 18.) where Christ is mentioned as the producer, or the efficient of all things, viz. as they now stand under the *Christian dispensation*, which is spoken of in scripture as the future, or the last age, i. e. the age of the Messiah, called the *world to come*, which is now put, (as the writer to the Hebrews tells us) not in subjection to, or under the disposition of angels, but under the direction and dominion of the Son himself (Heb. ii. 5.)—Jesus, the promised Messiah, is now, under God, or by his Father's appointment, the author and cause, the *Father* and *founder* of the Christian church and family. It is to *him*, and not to *angels*, that the Deity has assigned the sovereign direction, having put all things under his immediate conduct and government.—Now this, in my view, is the most natural and easy interpretation of the original word, and will give us the true sense of the place.

To which I may add, that there are several other words in the New Testament, which, in their original meaning, plainly denote the same thing, and convey the very same idea; namely, that Jesus was the *beginner*, as well as the *head* and *chief* of the new creation. See in particular,

cular, Acts iii. 15. Heb. v. 9. ch. xii. 1. where the original words do evidently import, that Jesus was the *causer*, the *introducer*, the *leader-on* and *perfecter* of a new and better dispensation, having to this end an extraordinary and divine legation, superior to that of Moses, or any of the ancient prophets.

And, laying these thoughts together, I should reckon it hardly possible to mistake the true and genuine sense of this, as well as the other characters and titles that are given to our Saviour in the New Testament. It shall suffice to say, that they are all peculiar to Christ as a *man*, or one in our nature: nor shall we able upon any other supposition, to put any rational or easy construction upon them. It was as a *man*, and in order to save *man*, that Jesus Christ came into the world, or was raised up by God according to ancient prophecy, to succour and relieve his brethren of the human race; even all, of what country or parentage soever, whether Greek or Jew, whether bond or free. Hence it is, (and so I understand the apostle when he tells us) that Christ is all and in all, i. e. the Saviour of all them that believe; there being no difference or distinction now made betwixt any who cordially embrace the religion of Jesus, and live up to the precepts of the Gospel.—And thus one grand comprehensive scheme of benevolence and mercy

between the Father and the Son, is jointly carried on and executed in favour of all the degenerate and sinful race of mankind.

Upon the whole, this phrase, the first-begotten, or the first-born, though it is figuratively used, must, by an easy and fair construction, be here understood to imply our Saviour's true and proper *humanity*, even as the first-born of any creature always denotes its being of the same kind, or the same specific nature.—And, in this light, as I now said, Christ and all true Christians are *brethren*, i. e. they are not only born or regenerated by the word and spirit of God to a new and divine life here, in conformity to his resurrection from the dead, but to the cheerful reviving hope of another and better life, eternal in the heavens.—And thus the several characters or epithets now mentioned appear to me in a very obvious, easy and striking light. They all perfectly agree and center in one and the same person, even the man Christ Jesus, who was born into the world like one of us, and who lived and died and rose again as our fore-runner, the author and finisher of the faith, the exemplar, the pledge and security of our final everlasting happiness in the kingdom and presence of God, Heb. v. 9. ch. xii. 2.

Jesus was a *man*, one made like unto us for all the purposes of our salvation, though he was
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at the same time, in a high and peculiar sense the *Son of God*, and had, as such, the most honourable and distinguishing titles given him. In other words, he was truly the *Son of man* as well as the *Son of God*, which are two phrases perfectly consistent with each other, being only two names for one and the same person. The highest *elogiums* are given him under one character as under the other; and they are all, as I now said, peculiar to the man Christ Jesus. He was therefore emphatically stiled the *Son of God*, which is always understood to denote, a person of the greatest eminence and distinction. He was the son of prophecy and of promise, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. He was distinguished, as such, from all the rest of mankind by his wonderful conception and birth, as well as by the signal labours of his life and ministry. Of all the sons of God, or of all good men, he was one that stood in the highest favour with God, and had the highest honours conferred upon him. He was abundantly enriched with supereminent gifts; and by his miraculous works of power and grace, he gave the most compleat testimony to his divine character and mission.—And, what crowns all, upon his resurrection from the dead, he obtained or acquired universal lordship and dominion over all creatures, the highest angels or dynasties not

excepted. So an inspired writer tells us, (Heb. i. 3, 4, 5.) He was made so much better than the angels, as he had by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they: for to which of the angels said he, at any time, (or where in scripture do we meet with any such language relative to them, or to any one, even the highest angelic orders, as this) thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee?—Which leads me, by way of corollary, to make one or two reflections of some importance.

REFLECTIONS.

IN the *first place*, this may help to give us a determinate and clear idea of our Saviour's true and proper character. Or it may shew us, in other words, who, and what manner of man he was; and that the greatest, the highest characteristic, by which he was known and distinguished from all other men, was, the *Son of God*. This was certainly the most comprehensive and expressive title, and what supposed or included in it every other, even the highest names of honour and distinction that we any where meet with in the sacred writings, either of the Old or New Testament. Jesus was the Son of God, κατ' ἐξοχην, by way of eminence. He is stiled the *Son of the blessed*, the *Son of the highest*, the *Son of the living God*.—And this language, I would

would observe, is easy to be understood. It does not import, as I said before, that he was of the *nature* or *essence* of God: but his Sonship was a name or title which God had decreed to give him all along, and from the very first, by way of preference and superiority to all others who have been ever named or denominated the sons of God. And it is applied to him by the sacred writers, with altogether as much emphasis and propriety after his resurrection, as that other title, the *Son of man* was, which he usually adopted, when speaking of himself, during his office and ministry in this world.

And this language, I say, is easy and intelligible. *The son of God* is a scriptural phrase, but not *God the Son*; no such words being ever used or applied to Christ during his whole public ministry. *The Spirit of God* also is a scriptural phrase, but not *God the Holy Ghost*. The other mode of speaking is highly improper and unintelligible, as well as unscriptural; and I must leave it to those who affect to deal in mystery.—

The whole matter turns upon one single point, which is indeed the basis of all true religion, namely, that there is and can be but one God, even *the Father*, who is supreme over all, who has no rival, competitor, or equal. All other beings are, in nature and kind, in essence and perfection, inferior and dependent, and in all

things subordinate to the one God, the great parent of universal nature.—The doctrine therefore of a *God-man* constituting one person; as well as the doctrine of a trinity in unity, is, in truth, no better than an affront to reason, and a burlesque upon scriptures.

It has been said, (how far it is true I'll not pretend to say) that there are thousands in the world who abandon Christianity, and millions who reject it, upon account of our teaching that God is a *triple being*, or more than one.—However, it is but too plain, that there are many protestants who in this article symbolize with the papists. These latter are so firmly fixed and bigotted to the doctrine of *transubstantiation*, and tell us, that it has been so long taught and established by many pious and learned men of their church, that it is now become needless, and even dangerous, to call the truths of it in question, or to examine and pry any farther into it. A certain remark, therefore, which I have often met with, is both shrewd and pertinent, viz. that in more articles than that of *transubstantiation*, there are many at this day, even in a protestant country, who are not ashamed of adoring, as a mystery, a doctrine which they would otherwise explode as a contradiction. And I think indeed it may be safely asserted, that the doctrine which has been commonly taught and
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received in the first ages, which I here refer to, is utterly inconsistent both with scripture and reason. And we cannot surely avoid seeing, if we do not wilfully shut our eyes, what a train of evil and pernicious consequences must necessarily flow from harbouring such opinions, which have nothing but custom, secular interest, and worldly policy to support them. I would only mention one short query under this head, *viz.* whether our putting Christ upon a sameness or level with the Father in acts of worship, or our addressing the Father, Son, and Spirit, in any doxology, as the one God, can be fairly justified, either upon the foot of reason or of divine revelation?

But my SECOND reflection may possibly carry in it greater strength of evidence and farther conviction. And that is,—to what great lengths do many run their mistaken notions in theology, or in true scripture divinity, when they make their direct and immediate, if not sole addressees to *Christ*, to the neglect and dishonour of the one living and true God; hereby making the son not only *equal*, but even *superior* to the Father who sent him?—A wide and important difference ought certainly to be made between the man Christ Jesus, though now exalted at the right hand of power, and him who is the only true God, the Father Almighty. For most certain it is, that God is our *primary* and *principal* Saviour;

viour; though many, even of the reformed church, Calvinists and others, do make their addresses to Christ, not only as the *one Saviour*, but the *one God*. And indeed almost all *modern* Christians, as one observes, seem to mean and understand by the term Saviour, *Christ alone*: Him they call upon to save them; seldom, perhaps, if ever mentioning, or thinking of any other Saviour, and ascribing little or nothing to the one God and Father of all. But how different, says he, is this from the stile and sentiments of Paul, Peter, John, and the other apostles, who in their writings every where apply the title of Saviour to God in the highest sense, and to Jesus Christ only in an inferior sense? And yet the *Moravians*, in their printed hymns, generally omit God their Saviour, and pay their principal or sole worship to the *Lamb*; acting herein, not only without, but against all scripture authority, [See a Scripture Account of the Attributes and worship of God, 1750.]

The apostles of our Lord teach us to praise and magnify *God our Saviour*, who raised up and sent Jesus Christ into the world, to act as his minister, instrument, or agent, in conveying the greatest blessings to mankind; *He*, that is, God, being the original author and cause of *salvation*, yea, of all other saviours, even Christ himself. The Virgin Mother magnified the Lord, styling

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God her Saviour, before Jesus was born, Luke i. 47, 48. And it is observable, that the great multitude, mentioned by St. John in the Revelations, (ch. iv. 9, 10.—) describe and distinguish God from Jesus Christ, under the high and appropriate character of him that *sitteth upon the throne*.

To which I may add, that there are many remarkable passages in the New Testament which very plainly and clearly support the distinction that we should always make between the Father, or the one supreme God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent; and wherein they are mentioned under special distinguishing names and characters, (John xvii. 3. 1 Cor. viii. 6. Eph. i. 1, 2, 3. Acts v. 30, 31. 1 Tim. i. 2. and many others.) And it ought not to be overlooked, that Christ himself prayed to God, as his Saviour, and was herein, no doubt, a proper example to us, and to all Christians, teaching us to pray, as he did, to God alone, he being the only proper object of religious worship.—Besides other texts, (as Mat. xxvi. 39. John xii. 27.) see in particular Heb. v. 7. which is a very remarkable passage. And as it greatly tends to strengthen and corroborate all that has been hitherto said concerning our Saviour's true and proper *humanity*, I shall beg leave to make some comment or descant upon it.

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And we have here, I think, no room to doubt, but that the author of this epistle had in his eye those earnest prayers which Christ made to his Father during his last sufferings, and under the apprehension and prospect of his approaching death. Our Lord, in the days of his flesh, (says this writer) offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard, [απο της ευλαβειας] in that he feared. Two different interpretations have been put upon this last clause of the verse. And though I cannot positively ascertain which is the more true and exact sense, yet I cannot but think that both of them do happily correspond, and greatly tend to explain and illustrate each other. Dr. *Whitby*, *Peirce*, and some others, understand it thus,—He was so heard, as to be delivered from his fears, being soon recovered from the death he feared, by a speedy resurrection or restoration to life. And thus he was heard *in* (or in respect to) the very thing he feared, that is, though he was not excused from drinking of the bitter cup, or from dying on the cross, yet he was so far heard, as to be speedily delivered from the dominion of death and the power of the grave, to a state of immortal honour and felicity. And all his prayers being thus answered, his innocent soul was no more uneasy or disturbed at the apprehensions of death,

death, but was perfectly freed from all fear on that account, and from all those unknown agonies and sorrows which he underwent in the latter scenes of his life.

Now this will appear to be no bad comment, if we take the original word in its *primary* sense. But I rather fall in with the other, and would adopt the *secondary* sense of the word, *εὐλαβία*, as denoting not so much a natural fear or *dismay* at the thoughts of dying, as a religious fear and reverence of the Deity, or, (as it is in the original, and our translators have it in the margin) he was heard *pro reverentiâ suâ*, i. e. he was heard for his piety and devotion: for so a word of the same original, the adjective *εὐλαβής*, is translated *just* and *devout* (Luke ii. 25. Acts ii. 5. ch. viii. 2.)—Our blessed Lord had a reverential and great regard to the will of his Father through the whole course of his life and ministry; and at last he meekly resigned himself to suffering and death without murmuring or complaint.

Taking the word in the former sense, it is no wonder, that, being a man as we are, he had those reluctances and feelings of body and mind which are common to human nature, even in its best estate. And such indeed was the sensibility of our Lord's frame, that he could not but be affected with sorrow, grief, and fear, and with all those sensations and appetites which we, and
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all mankind are more or less subject to in this embodied state : for Christ himself had *true* and *real*, though not sinful flesh, (Heb. iv. 15.) He was made and born of a woman, and was consequently found in fashion, or made in the likeness of man, though he knew no sin. But having a fleshly animal body, and a human soul as we have, he was in all other respects obnoxious to the same infirmities as we are.

This then is what deserves notice in the *first place*, that our Saviour here prays as a man, one that partook of flesh and blood ; and being truly man, he was consequently subject to temptations and trials of various kinds, as well as other men. All the ancient prophets speak of him as a *man* ; one of them describes him as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief ; despised, afflicted, and cruelly treated. We find this, as well as all other things that were foretold concerning him, remarkably verified in the gospel-history. And it is very observable, what this sacred penman immediately adds in the following verse,—that notwithstanding Christ was a son, a well-beloved son, he learned obedience in the days of his flesh, by going through a state of suffering.

Which leads us to observe in the *next place*, that our Saviour here prays, not merely as a man under affliction and sorrow, but as a truly *righteous*

teous and *good* man, with a filial humble trust and confidence in God, that he would help and relieve him under all his fears, and soon raise him to a state of high honour and favour at his right hand. Thus was Christ heard in that he feared. God his Father heard his cry and granted his request, and his obedience and resignation even unto death were highly honoured and rewarded.—Now these observations we see are all directly to our present purpose, as they tend to strengthen and corroborate what has been said upon our Saviour's prayer at the close of his public mission.—And, if I should here stop to make some practical use of this important thought, the reader, I hope, will excuse it.

PRACTICAL USES.

1st. **WE** have, throughout our Saviour's whole life, and especially in the concluding scenes of it, an admirable example of a filial dependence and trust in God; an encouraging example of persevering piety and obedience proper to instruct and animate us, and all his followers, to act as *men*, as reasonable beings should do, with a suitable decorum and dignity, in discharging those respective offices and employments in life, to which the providence of God hath called us. We have here an excellent
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and amiable pattern of faith, and good works, and of every virtue; and, in particular, of that dutiful and becoming submission which we all owe to the will of God, our heavenly Father, under the severest trials that can befall us in this state of discipline and probation.—Now this was an example peculiarly fitted for *men*, creatures of our own make and frame, and well adapted in all respects to our situation and circumstances in this world. And Jesus himself being a man, sent by God on purpose to restore, instruct and save mankind, it was doubtless designed to teach us many useful and important lessons of a *moral* kind; such as these.

2dly, It should teach us, v. g. to expect and look for trials and afflictions in this world, and how to live so as to secure the favour of God when we come to die.—It should teach us to imitate and draw forth into life, as far as may be, his most excellent, amiable, and perfect character;—to shew the same zeal, diligence, and fidelity in serving God and our generation as Jesus himself did,—to employ our time and all our abilities and talents in doing good;—to live by faith in God and another world;—to be earnest in supplication and prayer to our Father in heaven; — to bear our lot in the world, whatever it be, with patience, humility, meekness, and an intire resignation to the wise appointment

pointment and good pleasure of God under every afflictive and discouraging event, having always a respect, as he had, to the bright recompence of reward in another life.—In a word, was he, the divine Jesus, a pattern of all righteousness, of universal charity and benevolence, we should hence learn how we ought to walk and to please God in all the duties of a good life.—And was he, the holy one of God, heard for his reverence and devotion, and for his ready and cheerful obedience to the will of his Father who sent him, we may here see the efficacy and success of fervent prayer; the happy end and issue of an upright life and conversation. Thus did the man Christ Jesus, as well as St. Paul, and other holy men, (though in a far superior and eminent degree) fight the good fight of faith, and finish his course with joy.

3dly, Which leads me to observe, that he hath also taught us how to behave,—as in all the services and trials of life, so in the nearest prospect and view of death; directing us to address our prayers, as he did, to that supreme almighty being who is able to deliver and save us in every exigence and distress, and to afford us every necessary cordial support under all our feelings, afflictions and fears, in this state of trial and mortality. I have, says he, glorified thee on earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do, and now, O Father, glorify

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thou me, &c. This was the plain and genuine language of conscious virtue and integrity, and it carries in it an air of inward satisfaction and triumph upon the review of his past life and ministry. Much like this is that lofty and sublime stile of the royal prophet, expressing his faith and hope, his humble confidence and joy in God, Psa. xvi. 8.—I have set the Lord always before me—therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth. Thou wilt not suffer thy holy one to see corruption, but wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy, &c. How should this excite us all to live as it becometh men and Christians, the professed disciples of the holy Jesus, endeavouring to walk as he walked? We may then rejoice in the blessed hope of a glorious resurrection as he did, and cheerfully commit our departing spirits into his hands, in all the humble confidence of prayer, and with a full assurance of faith, looking for a state of glory, honour, and immortality in the kingdom of God.

Now—it would be very natural to ask here, how we can possibly derive any such encouragement and consolation from what is said of Christ in this, or in any other text of the New Testament, but upon this supposition, that he was a man, a real man like one of us, and one designed and raised up by God to be our great exemplar and pattern, our instructor and our guide in
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the way to heaven, that state of consummate happiness and glory which awaits all the children of God, all the faithful in Christ Jesus. He could never be said to apply himself to God in this prayer as his *Saviour*, his *rewarder*, any otherwise than as one of the same nature with us. Nor can we consider him, with the least truth or propriety, to be, in any other light, an example to us:—particularly an example of humility and devotion, of reverence and submission. Accordingly we may observe, that when he was exerting the most signal unparalleled acts of a miraculous power, he was so far from ascribing any thing to himself, that he always appeared in the character of a *suppliant*, or a *dependant*, making all his addresses, all his acknowledgments, to the Father, from whom he received all his powers and credentials. It is evident therefore, that he must have been a very different being from the one God who sent him; to say nothing of the many intimations to this purpose, which he often gave his disciples when he personally conversed with them.

His *prayers*, in particular, do all strongly demonstrate, that he had deeply fixed upon his mind this great principle of all true religion, *viz.* that his Father was God and he alone. See Mat. iv. 10.—And it is observable, that this whole seventeenth chapter of St. John's gospel, is

one continued prayer to God in behalf of himself and his disciples; and that in the third verse, particularly, he styles his Father the *only true God*, in contradiction to himself, who was sent by the only true God, that supreme almighty being, who first gave him his commission, and afterwards confirmed it by many signal and repeated testimonies in the course of his ministry.

It shall suffice to observe that, from what has been said, we see the truth and importance of these, and such like principles; *viz.* that Christ was a person or being, not only *distinct* from the Father, but *inferior* to him,—that strict and proper Deity is, and can be, *but one*, and is appropriate to the Father alone,—that the Deity of the Father and the divinity of the son, are different and distinct ideas,—that Jesus Christ, though he styled himself the son of man, was nevertheless, truly and eminently speaking, the son of God, as he bore a most amiable and excellent character, and was highly distinguished above all his brethren of the human race,—that proper Deity and humanity are such incompatible ideas that they can never appertain to any being so as to constitute or denominate one single person or individual,—that the unity and supremacy of God, the Father, should be always laid down as an eternal truth, a fixed and immutable principle, from which we should never deviate in any of our theological enquiries,—and finally,
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that much will depend upon our having right and just notions of the peculiar distinct characters of the Father and the son; in what order and degree they stand, with regard to one another, and what is their proper joint agency and concern in the œconomy of redemption, or in the affair of our salvation, as it is represented to us in the sacred writings.

A great deal, I say, will depend upon our having some clear and settled notions in this matter. For unless we endeavour to keep our ideas of Father and son distinct, the scripture doctrine concerning Jesus Christ will be involved in much darkness and obscurity. And it is in consequence of a general prevailing error in this capital point, that we have had such abusive representations given us of pure and primitive Christianity, insomuch that its original beauty and simplicity are hardly to be discerned amidst the many erroneous tenets which have long disfigured and debased the true and genuine doctrines of Christianity. And this may be some apology for my dwelling so long on the present argument *. In
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* I can sincerely say, upon the whole, that I have endeavoured to set our Saviour's person and character in what, I apprehend, to be the true light, and agreeable to the harmonious language and sense of scripture. And though some may possibly think, that I have been too circumstantial and prolix, or have too often repeated and urged the same sentiment,

one word, it should always be remembered, as an undeniable truth, or *postulatum*, that the *unity of God* is a principle that runs through every part of the Bible; that it is, as I said in the beginning, the grand fundamental doctrine of the Patriarchal, Mosaical, and Christian dispensation, and what ought to be strictly maintained against all human authority, civil or ecclesiastical; it being an *historical* truth, that when once this great and primary article began to be contested in the fourth and fifth centuries, other gross corruptions followed a-pace; till, at last, popery, with all its train of absurd opinions and superstitious rites, was established.—And the same holds true of the Athanasian doctrine and worship, which did not obtain in the first and purest ages of the church, for the first three hundred years after Christ.

But enough, I hope, has been said upon this head, to shew that the true and proper Deity of Christ cannot have the least foundation in this text of St. John, more than in any other. It is time therefore to dismiss this groundless

ment, I would yet hope, that what has been said may, in some measure, help to clear and facilitate our conceptions; or at least, that every judicious and candid Reader will allow, that what I have hitherto advanced on this subject hath a much greater tendency to heighten and illustrate than to lessen and degrade our Saviour's *true* and *real* character.

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theory. And I should now proceed to observe further, that the doctrine of our Saviour's *pre-existence* is no more to be found in this text than that of his true and proper *Deity*. This it must be owned is an interesting enquiry, though not attended, perhaps, with such real difficulties as some have imagined.

But of this, in the third part more fully.

PART

P A R T III.

The doctrine of our Saviour's eternal generation and pre-existence considered and refuted : Or, the comment upon some parts of Christ's prayer, at the close of his public ministry, concluded.

NOTHING, I apprehend, has done greater disservice to the cause of Christianity, or tended more to open the mouths of scoffers and infidels, than the mysterious and absurd notions which many have taught concerning the *person of Christ*. I shall therefore pursue my enquiries upon this subject a little further.—And since this text, in particular, which we have in part considered already, has been thought by many a *difficult* one, my aim and endeavour has been to set it in a true light, and to give one consistent view of it in both its parts. *Father glorify thou me with thy own self; it follows, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*

And here, as it is very natural to enquire, so it must be of some importance rightly to understand and consider what was our Saviour's true meaning in this petition which he made to his Father. How are we to interpret these words? Does he here give any, the least countenance, to the commonly received opinion of his true and proper *deity*? Or rather, does not the very language of this address strongly decide in favour of his true and proper *humanity*? and lead us to conclude that Jesus was a man, like one of us, or one that partook of our nature? This has been distinctly considered, and I hope fully evinced in the former part.

The question that now occurs, is, whether he had an *eternal* or *prior existence* before he was conceived in the womb of the virgin, and made his appearance in the world? or, (which will amount to the same thing) whether it can be proved from this text, or from any other passage in the New Testament, that he was any more than a *man*? The former may appear, at first, more agreeable to the *letter* of this text; but the latter I must own, is more upon a level with my conception, and does best accord in all respects with the general sense of scripture; I mean, that he was a *real man*, or one in our nature, having a *true body* and a *reasonable soul*.

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It must be owned, however, that the words carry in them the face and appearance of a two-fold difficulty. The one respects the truth of the sentiment or opinion itself, namely, that of our Saviour's *actual pre-existence* in a former state. The other relates to the *manner* or *mode* of expression here used, which has been thought by many to countenance and support that opinion; "With the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Some distinct notice should be taken of each.

As to the former, I would observe, that many weighty objections seem to lie against it; especially, if my argument or reasoning, grounded upon the first clause of this verse, be admitted as just and conclusive.—If this be granted, then the doctrine of the pre-existent scheme must necessarily involve us in a *great* and *real*, if not in an *insuperable* difficulty, and be utterly inconsistent with all that has been hitherto said concerning his true and proper humanity.

The difficulty is this, or it may be thus represented. Jesus Christ is here supposed to ask for a glory which he actually enjoyed with his Father before the world was, that is *eternally*. If so, it must be a glory which was enjoyed by his *divine*, and not by his *human* nature; this being not then conceived. It is, at least, very evident that it was a glory which he *had not* at the time when he uttered

uttered this prayer: for if his *divine*, or *super-angelic* nature, had been then possessed of that glory, there would have been no room to ask or pray for it, since he would have then enjoyed it as fully as he ever had done. The question then is, how a glory which his supposed deity or divinity had enjoyed *in*, or *from* eternity, (and consequently a glory which must have been *essential* to it,) could be ever parted from it, or be for any time or season deprived of it.—Or, in other words, had Christ been really God, as he was man, or God as well as man, he would have been in possession of the same glory still, and needed not, as he here does, to ask it as a reward of his obedience. His superior divine nature or deity would have supplied him with such glory as he wanted, without being beholden to another. The late Dr. *Watts* has allowed, that “it cannot be consistent with proper deity, “either to be divested of glory, or to pray for “the restoration of it.” Nor can I conceive (by the way) how the same thing can be very consistently said of any *angelic* being, or spirit of an inferior or subordinate rank, as some have asserted. But this is clear and evident, beyond all doubt, that the man Christ Jesus, who, upon his assumption into heaven, *received* from God the Father honour and glory, could not be said to have had that glory originally in himself which
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God gave him, and for which he here *supplicates* his Father, addressing him, at the same time, as the only *true God*, the source and fountain of all true honour and felicity.

Now, such is the difficulty which arises here, that it is impossible to reconcile the two ideas of his proper humanity and pre-existence. The notions are so incoherent, and even opposite to each other, that, if we take the latter words, as they here stand in their *literal* sense, we shall never be able to reconcile both parts of the text, or to set them in any clear and consistent light. For, if we believe Christ's true and proper deity, we must of course believe his eternal pre-existence. And, on the other hand, if we only believe his true and proper humanity, it will be impossible to form any notion of his pre-existing at all in a former state, either as God, or an angel, or some spirit of high rank and eminence, and (as many suppose) next in dignity and glory to the supreme, or to the one God and Father of all.

The doctrine, therefore, of our Saviour's true and proper *humanity*, and that of his *non-pre-existence*, must stand or fall together; the two ideas are so closely and inseparably connected, that, if one or either of them be false and groundless, the other must be so too. And, *vice versa*, if one or either of them be true, they are both true.

true.—If Jesus, the promised Messiah, actually existed in a former state, how could he be said to be a man, or one of the same specific nature with us? Or, if he was a real man, and one made like unto us, how could he be said to have existed at all before his conception in the womb of the virgin? This, I must own, is a difficulty that I could never surmount, and is a strong presumptive argument with me, that the doctrine which has been commonly received concerning our Saviour's personal character, has never yet been well digested or rightly understood.

Let us but carefully examine the common opinion of his pre-existent state by the joint aid of *scripture* and *reason*, and then see if their appears to be any, the least foundation for it. I would here make my appeal to both, and observe that, as the scripture, when rightly understood, can never be supposed to contradict or overthrow the natural light, or the common and obvious dictates of reason; so the true and genuine sense and meaning of scripture must, *in this*, and in all other points of doctrine, be perfectly consentaneous with itself; though it should sometimes happen, that the language, the idiom, or mode of expression, may carry in it an appearance of difficulty, or be somewhat dark and obscure, and not so easy to be understood; which may be the case here, as well as in other passages in holy writ.

writ. But, if we would take the *analogy*, or the general and prevailing sense of scripture for our rule, as we ought to do, then it is not a single text or two that should destroy the testimony which arises from others that are more numerous, as well as more plain and obvious. And this, I apprehend, will evidently appear in the sequel of this enquiry.

I would just remark at present, that, as there is nothing (so far, at least, as I can find) any where said in scripture, either of the *eternal generation* of the son, or of his *pre-existing* in a former state, then what I have said with respect to the true *humanity* of our Saviour's person, must, upon the whole, be most consonant to the voice of reason as well as scripture. Or, in other words, this must be the true doctrine of the New Testament concerning Jesus Christ.—We do not read of his being any where called the son of God antecedent to his conception, and that salutation which the angel gave the virgin upon the news or tidings which he brought her of that happy and signal event; see Luke i. 26, 34. It is there foretold, that the holy child, which she should conceive and bring forth should be called the son of the highest, or the son of God. But then it should be observed, that no other son of God, is there, or any where else revealed and promised in scripture, but he who stiled himself the

the son of man, even Jesus of Nazareth, who was born of a woman, and was therefore one of the same kind as we are. Nor do any of the primitive writers, even by Dr. Waterland's own account, ever speak of any eternal generation of a son. No; Jesus, the son of God, was made after our likeness. He was accordingly born in time, as we and all other men are, and not created from eternity. So says the apostle, Gal. iv. 4. In the fulness of time, according to ancient prophecy, God sent forth his son, who was made [γενόμενον] not to be made of a woman. And it was in the same nature which he brought into the world with him, even the human, that he here prays to be exalted and glorified with the Father.

Those therefore who believe his proper Deity and pre existence, have been much embarrassed with this and other texts that speak of his exaltation. Many, even the most orthodox writers, both ancient and modern, have acknowledged, that he could not properly be exalted in respect to the divine nature, or became higher than he always was from eternity. They have all of them found it difficult, and even impossible to conceive, that he, who was himself the Lord of glory, who was with God from the beginning, and had glory with the Father before the world was, should be exalted to honours which he was originally

originally possessed of before; much less have any new additional honours conferred upon him, as he afterwards had, when a judicial power and authority was given him, and all the heavenly hierarchies were put in subjection under him. "He was, says one of these writers, infinitely too high, too great, and too divine, to receive any accession of dignity, any real encrease of perfection, honour, or glory."

Now,—how these writers can reconcile, or explain and adjust, these and such like difficulties, consistently with themselves and their own professed principles, I shall not stand to enquire. There has no solution been yet given, that appears to me any way clear and satisfactory: neither do I think it possible to remove the difficulties which hang upon the scheme of pre-existence, upon any other principle than what I have before asserted; namely, that Jesus Christ, though a great and distinguished person, and one that stood in the highest favour with God, was nevertheless a true and real man, or one made like unto us. Upon no other imaginable ground or supposition can we possibly conceive of his having any *remuneration* or reward given him, or any peculiar honour conferred upon him.—But, on the contrary, it will be no way difficult to conceive of this, if we consider God, the universal Father and friend of mankind, as
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the rewarder of all his faithful servants, of all holy, virtuous, and good men, who steadily adhere to him, and to his cause and interest in the world, even as Jesus, our divine master did, throughout all the labours and sufferings of his life. And accordingly we may observe with what great propriety he here applies, or rather *appeals* to God, as his almighty Father and friend. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

Which last words will naturally introduce the *second difficulty* which I proposed to consider in this text. It is well known that they have been urged by many as a weighty and strong objection to what I have hitherto advanced on this subject. And here, it is readily granted, as I said before, that the *manner or mode of expression* here used, may appear at the first view, to countenance and support the commonly received doctrine of our Saviour's pre-existence with the Father from eternity. But let us see what argument can be drawn from hence in favour of this opinion which the church has been in such long possession of, and which, I believe, is still looked upon by great numbers as an essential and fundamental article in the creed of every true Christian.—Our Saviour, indeed, speaks of the glory which he here prayed for, as what he

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had with the Father before the world was. But *how* this is to be understood, or what particular evidence and proof of his prior existence is to be found in this text more than in any other? is the present question, or matter of our enquiry.

But, before I enter upon it directly, it may be proper to make two or three previous remarks, which may be more or less applicable in the present case, *viz.* that there are many passages in the sacred writings which, if we should understand them literally, would be either quite unintelligible, or utterly false and groundless;—that many erroneous opinions have been received and propagated by an hasty and superficial regard to the *sound*, more than to the *sense* of scripture;—that where any particular text, in the *letter* of it, has been thought to countenance a favourite hypothesis, the scope and view of the writer has been too often overlooked, and that unbiaſſed freedom of enquiry prevented, which is necessary to the investigation of truth.—To which I may add, (as before) that since the sacred writings must be always supposed in every point of doctrine, to be perfectly consistent and harmonious, (for one *inspired* writer never contradicts another) we should carefully see, that all the doctrines or opinions which we build upon them, all the deductions and inferences which we draw from them, are perfectly harmonious
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nious and consistent too, that so the analogy of reason and scripture may appear, and carry the greater force of evidence and conviction.

And now, if we take such hints as these along with us, one general observation perhaps may suffice to remove all the difficulties that may appear to lie in these words; *namely*, that, if what has been said of our Saviour's personal character be admitted as true, and most consonant to the general language and sense of scripture, then it will be manifest, that the latter part of the text can never be interpreted or understood in the *strict* and *literal* sense: but we shall be obliged to have recourse to some or other *figurative* mode of speech, in order to render it easy and intelligible. And here many instances might be produced, wherein words that have a seeming contrariety in the letter are often used to express with the greater force and emphasis, the true sense and meaning of the writer or speaker. And accordingly, some I think have happily explained the words of our Saviour in the latter part of this text by having recourse to a rhetorical figure, (*p*) or to a certain concise and strong mode

(*p*) Observandus est locutionis modus, *habui* inquit *ad te*, quod si expendas *Oxymoron* est.—Usitatum est sacris scriptoribus ut ea quæ decreto Dei, confirmata esse, cognoverant, etiam si futura sint, in presenti, aut præterito tempore,

mode of speaking, not unusual with many writers, when they suppose, or take it for granted, that they are well understood, and that their meaning is sufficiently clear and obvious, without the need of any particular and distinct explication.

The true and proper humanity of Christ, therefore, notwithstanding any thing that may have been inferred from these words to the contrary, appears to be the true scripture doctrine of the New Testament, what we should always and steadily adhere to, and never lose sight of, in any of our religious and theological enquiries. If our Saviour was a man, his nature was but one, specifically one, as it is with us and the whole of human kind; and consequently, the glory which he here prayed for must be a different glory from what he is supposed to have had with his Father from eternity; for that must have been a glory *essential* and *appropriate* to him, as a being of another and different nature, and of a much higher rank and order in the scale of beings.—In other words, if our Saviour was a true and real man, he could not have an ante-

tanquam jam confecta, effere solent.—Et si ergo Christus, illam gloriam nondum ne ipsa erat consecutus, tamen propter certitudinem, jam se eam habuisse affirmat, quanquam explicationis causa addit, *apud Deum*.—Such is the interpretation or comment which Enjedinus, Grotius, Le Clerc, and others have put upon this passage in St. John.

cedent

cedent nature, or a nature of any other kind previous to his conception; or, which comes to the same thing, he could not have too distinct natures at once, the human and the divine: of which inexplicable mystery enough has been said already. But to be a little more particular.

In order to point out and determine the true genuine sense, and take off the seeming difficulty that lies in these words, I would put this comment upon them, nor do I think them indeed capable of any other. Thus, "now, O Father, glorify thou me with the glory, or raise me to the greatness which thou, in thine infinite wisdom and love, hast decreed and ordained for me before the world was; and which, I am persuaded of, from that paternal affection and regard which thou hast always shewn me." Our blessed Lord, who was in the bosom of the Father, and let into the counsels and purposes of the almighty as no other man ever was, did not only hope for a bright recompence of reward, but he was *rationaly* and *well* assured of it. The man Christ Jesus, that beloved and favourite son, had a crown of glory set before him, or the highest honours and rewards in expectancy. And this indeed he might justly argue and infer from the essential immutable rectitude and goodness of God.—He also knew it was *one*, and not the *least* part of the glory de-

signed for him, that God his Father would soon put, or deliver all things into his hands; or, as it is in the second verse, that he would give him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as should believe in him through the efficacy and success of his own ministry, or that of his apostles after him.

This, I say, appears to be a *principal* part of the glory which he now had in prospect, if we either advert to some of the last discourses which he had with his disciples, or to this his farewell prayer, in particular, which he here made for them just before his last sufferings. And indeed, from all circumstances laid together, it is pretty evident to me, that the glory which he here prayed for, was not a glory that he ever had *actually* enjoyed before, but only what he had in the breast or foreknowledge of God, and in such a hope or expectation as was grounded on the love of God, and did entirely rest upon the pleasure and good will of his Father. This construction would preclude every difficulty, and free the words of this text from all the appearance of inconsistency.

It has been thought by some that our translation seem *equivocal*, and that the original of this place, strictly rendered would run thus,—the glory which I had before the world was, with thee [*παρα σι*] that is, in thine eternal purpose
or

or decree: which seems to express the true and real sense of our Saviour in this address, where he has a manifest eye to that future approaching glory which he hoped very soon to enjoy *with God*, his Father. Now, O Father, glorify thou me with thy *own self*, &c. he plainly speaks of a glory which God had reserved, or prepared and laid up for him; or which he had all along, even before the world was, determined to give him, as the reward of his obedience, when he had accomplished the ends of his ministry, or finished the work which God had given him to do.—So I would interpret the passage before us, and not that our blessed Lord did actually exist with the Father in a *pristine* state of heavenly glory, as most have hitherto understood it.

And this, I think, it may be truly and *emphatically* said of the man Christ Jesus, (as in the context) he had a glory GIVEN him; that is, ordained and decreed for him, before the world was; and that he might very pertinently and properly apply to God, as he here does, in the firm expectation and hope of it, being well assured, that his labours and sufferings in the cause of truth and righteousness would not be in vain. Accordingly, our Saviour seems very clearly to explain himself in the *twenty-fourth* and *twenty-sixth* verses of this chapter, where he

speaks of the glory which he prayed for, as a glory that was virtually and, in effect, *given him* already, it being what he was as well ascertained of, as if he had been then in the full possession of it, and his Father had *actually* given it to him*. Father, says he, glorify thou me with the glory which thou hast *given* me, (verse 24.)—for thou hast loved me before the foundation of the world.

The celestial glory which was given our Saviour after his resurrection and ascension, was given him as the *Son of man*, in reward of his voluntary obedience, and in pursuance of the eternal counsel, purpose, and will of God, who sent him into the world to be the instructor and Saviour, the *light* and *life* of men. And surely he, the beloved Son of God, the favourite of heaven, might be as properly and truly be said to have this *glory given him*, as true Christians, all the faithful in Christ Jesus, are said to have grace *given them* before the world began,—2 Tim. i. 9.

Now, this appears to me a very rational and just interpretation of the text before us. And though Dr. *Clarke*, and others in the *Arian scheme*, have rejected it, I cannot see what other rational and consistent sense can be put upon it. The sacred dialect throughout seems perfectly to agree with it, and there are many passages in the New

* Certum est, interprete ipso Christo, *habere & datum esse*, prorsus idem significare. Grot.

Testament, that give the greatest countenance and support to it. And for this reason, as will afterwards appear, I am constrained to differ from that learned divine, as well as many other respectable writers on this subject. In their modes of explication they greatly differ from each other when they speak of the *person of Christ*; but they all seem to agree in one general notion of his *pre-existence*. Some have thought our Saviour an *angelic* being, and that he originally existed without a body as the angels do. Others, that he was a super-angelic spirit, having natural and deputed powers far superior to angels; or, that he was the first immediately derived being, next in dignity to the one Supreme, otherwise called the *Logos*, who in time took upon him a human body *only*. Some have thought, that he actually pre-existed in *the form of God*, and enjoyed royal glory and dignity in the Father's presence, not only before the world was, but in all the following ages, till he emptied himself of it at his incarnation. A modern writer, in particular, has given it as his opinion, that before Christ came into the world, he appeared and acted in the church of old, as the minister and representative of the Deity, or the visible symbol of his presence in the *shechinah*; that this was the glory here spoken of in this text of St. John, —that glory which he had with the Father before
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the world was, and which he here prayed might be again restored to him. [See Dr. Richie's *Peculiar Doctrines of Revelation*, vol. II. p. 310, 336.]

Others again have advanced what is called a *modern*, or a more *refined* sort of Arianism, supposing that Christ had a human soul which existed, and was united to the divine nature, long before his coming to dwell in flesh and blood; or that he had a pre-existent spirit, which was suited in its own proper nature to a state of union with a human body, and that there was an *humiliating* change in this pre-existent soul or spirit of Christ, it being first changed to that of a man, or degraded into the rank of a human soul before it animated a human body, supposing likewise, (though I think without any appearance of truth or probability) that it was no way inconsistent with, or contrary to the nature of a heavenly spirit of superior rank, to submit to such extraordinary and voluntary debasement in order to carry on the grand scheme of redemption. [See Remarks upon Dr. *Lardner's* Letter on the Logos in the *Theological Repository*, vol. I. p. 431; as also some very pertinent thoughts concerning the person of Christ, in defence of that letter, by *Charistes*, vol. II. p. 73.]

But why should any persons indulge to these, or such like imaginary notions, when the current
sense

sense and harmony of scripture in this point must appear, I think, sufficiently clear and obvious to every open and ingenious mind. It is surely enough for us to believe, that our Saviour was a man, or one made like unto us, as that matter has been explained, without running into endless speculations, or any perplexing and useless enquiries of this kind. Where does it appear throughout the New Testament that Jesus Christ had any other soul than what was *human*, or that any *angelic* or *superangelic* nature supplied the place of a human soul in the person of Christ? I cannot see how the language of scripture, when consistently interpreted, can be said to favour any such scheme as that of his pre-existence. But, that Christ was made and formed in a signal and extraordinary manner, by the immediate agency and power of the Deity, is a plain, credible, and scripture doctrine, and no more difficult to conceive of than the formation of *Adam*, the first of the human race, who was likewise stiled the *son of God*, as well as the *Messiah* himself, they being both created and formed by the same miraculous power and energy of the one God and Father of all. Jesus was likewise one of our nature, as he was one of the same common pedigree and descent. This was what *Moses* foretold many ages before, “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up
“unto you of your brethren like unto me.” To
which

which I may add, that, as *Moses* was not only a great prophet, but a law-giver and mediator between God and the people, so was *Jesus*, the promised Messiah; he was like unto *Moses* in this respect, though of much higher rank and superior merit, being, eminently speaking, the great deliverer and Saviour, not of one nation or people only, but of the whole human race and family; for which purpose he was pre-ordained of God from eternity, and made the great subject of ancient prophecy.

But, that I may further illustrate and confirm this point, and shew that this text cannot be understood in the sense which many have put upon it, I shall here make two remarks, or urge one or two things which seem to carry some weight in them. And,

In the *first place*, it may be of some use to observe, that the GOSPEL of Christ (which is every where spoken of as a singular dispensation of divine grace and favour to mankind) is often made mention of in the New Testament as fore-ordained from eternity, as foretold by holy and inspired men in the early ages of the world, and at length made manifest by the personal appearance and ministry of the Messiah. It is represented as a mystery, or *secret*, that was to be opened and revealed in due season by the Son of God, who was to that end, in the *fulness of time*,
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born into the world according to ancient prophecy, and the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. We cannot but remark, that the language of the sacred writers upon this head, is very strong and expressive. The apostle calls the *Gospel* the hidden mystery which God ordained before the world to our glory, 1 Cor. ii. 7.—In another place, the mystery which from the beginning of the world was *hid in God*, but was afterwards made manifest according to the eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus, Eph. iii. 9, 11.—Elsewhere he speaks of the Gospel, as what had been confirmed and sealed by the power of God, who hath saved us and called us with a holy calling, according to his own purpose and grace which was *given us in Christ Jesus* before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Tim. i. 9, 10. Hence Christians, both Jewish and Gentile converts, are said to be chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, Eph. i. 4, 9.—And once more, the Gospel is spoken of as the revelation of a mystery which had been secret since the world began, but is now (in the present age) made known or manifest to all nations for the obedience of faith, Rom. xvi. 25, 26. But, as passages of this sort are too numerous to recite at large, what I would principally remark here is,

Secondly,

Secondly, that what is said of the *Gospel of Christ* may serve to explain those texts in particular which more immediately relate to the *PERSON of Christ*; namely, that he himself, as well as the Gospel which he taught, was *pre-ordained* before the foundation of the world. There is nothing at all said of pre-existing in the one case any more than in the other, but only that they were both of them fore-ordained and foretold from the beginning, and that both of them came to *exist*, or rather *co-exist* at the same time and period, by the special ordination and wise appointment of providence. Thus we are necessitated to understand that passage in the Apocalypse (ch. xvii. 3.) of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, i. e. in the eternal immutable counsel and purpose of the Almighty. As likewise that remarkable text, John viii. 58, Verily, verily, I say unto you, before *Abraham* was, I am, i. e. I am the true Messiah promised and foretold before your father Abraham existed. [On this see *The True Doctrine of the New Testament concerning Jesus Christ considered*, p. 82. second edition, 1771.] It is only upon this *principle*, or by this *mode of interpretation*, that I can possibly understand many other places that might be mentioned, both in St. John's writings, and in the Epistles, particularly that passage in St. Peter (1 Pet. i. 10.) Who verily, *viz. Christ*, was fore-ordained before the

the foundation of the world, but was manifested in these last times for you.—And hence it is that *Christ* and the *Gospel* do often stand in the apostolic writings to denote one and the same thing †, since they both pre-existed from eternity in the *mind of God*, and were accordingly foretold by the ancient prophets, those holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And accordingly Christ himself, in regard to light and advantages which the Gospel affords mankind in these latter ages, is, by a very easy and usual metonymy, stiled the *light* and *life* of the world, or the *resurrection* and the life to all them that believe in him.—And now, upon the whole, there are two or three corollaries that may be naturally and easily deduced from what has been said. Namely,

COROLLARIES.

COR. I. **I**T will hence follow, that, if our Saviour had no *real personal existence* with the Father, he could have, or possess, no *actual glory* with him before the world was: and consequently, that the *glory* here meant in this text, must be a glory that God had designed or provided for him, as the reward of his obe-

† Eph. iv. 20. Acts viii. 5. Gal. iii. 24. Phil. i. 15, 16. Col. ii. 5, 6, 8. Heb. xi. 26. Acts xxiv. 24. 1 Tim. ii. 7. 1 Cor. ii. 16.

dience,

dience, — a glory not merely appropriate to a virtuous character, (which is the common hope and portion of all good men) but peculiar to the man Christ Jesus, as the one mediator of God's appointment, or his prime chosen minister in conducting, and carrying on to perfection, the grand scheme of providence and redemption.— And this, I think, appears very plain from the words immediately preceding, (ver. 4.) “ I have glorified thee on earth : I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me,” &c. To which may be subjoined other passages of like import, (as Phil. ii. 9. Heb. ii. 9, 10. ch. xii. 2. Luke xxiv. 26, 44, 45, 46.) from which places, and many others (I might say from the whole tenor of the Gospel) it is apparent that our Lord had not, before he was conceived in the womb of the Virgin, that glory which he here prayed for ; but that the glory here intended, was subsequent to his labours and sufferings on earth, and appointed to succeed and crown his persevering obedience unto death *.—To which I may add, what

* Jesus, who was for *a little while* lower than the angels, was, upon his resurrection from the dead, made higher than they, even the highest orders of them ; being then placed at the head of all created beings. As he excelled all others in a truly virtuous moral character, so likewise in the dignity

what will further strengthen the argument I am upon.

COR. II. That the glory which Christ here requested for himself, was the *same*, that is, a like *proportionable* glory with that which he requested of the Father in behalf of his disciples, and therefore a glory not prior to his *birth*, but consequential or subsequent to his *death*. He gave *them*, his apostles and immediate followers, not only the glory, or the power of working miracles, as he himself did, for the first propagation of the Gospel, and the establishment of Christianity in the world, but he also gave them the promise, or the comfortable expectation and assurance of a future glory in the beatific vision and enjoyment of God. His prayer to the Father for himself is, Glorify thou me, *κατα τιαντα*, i. e. with thy own self, or in thy *blissful immediate* presence. And the same prayer he also made for his disciples, that they might share with him in the same glory which God had given him, or destined and appointed for him before the world was.

dignity and glory, in the power and dominion that was conferred upon him, in reward of his singular merit. So it immediately follows; for the suffering of death he was crowned with glory and honour. He who created angels and men, decreed one to be head over them all, even the man Christ Jesus.

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His words towards the close of the chapter (particularly in the 22d and 24th verses) seem to have a very emphatical meaning, and clearly to point out that twofold glory I have now mentioned.—“The glory which thou hast given me, “I have given them, that they may be one even “as we are one:” i. e. I have transferred this honour to them, even the power of working miracles, that they may obtain the highest credit and authority wherever they preach the Gospel in my name, that the world may be convinced that thou has sent me, and that they and I do act by one and the same power and divine commission.—Or he may be here understood to pray, in effect, that God would continue with them the same power and authority to work miracles, and to preach the Gospel, as he himself had received from the Father.—Our blessed Lord had *their* happiness, and the success of their ministry, much at heart, as well as *his own*; and he well knew that the success of his Gospel in the world would very much redound both to his glory (*q*), and to his

(*q*) To this purpose, the words of our Saviour seem very remarkable, in John xii. 28. Father, glorify thy name; or, (as some copies read it) *μὴ τὸ ὄνομα, my name.* *R. Steph.* In answer to which prayer, there immediately came an awful majestic voice from heaven, like thunder, saying, I have both glorified it, and I will glorify it again. Thus did the Father here, as at other times, openly and solemnly acknowledge

his Father's glory. He therefore prayed, as he himself here tells us, not only for his apostles, more immediately, whom he was now sending into the world, but for them also that should believe on him through their word, that they all might be sanctified through the truth, and so become one with the Father and him (ver. 21.) or as it follows (ver. 23.) "I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in me;" that is, "consecrated or fitted [*us to us*] to carry on the same design; that all men might discern from the works which they wrought in the name of Christ, that he who sent *them*, was himself sent of God; and that they had the same tokens of his love to *them*, as Christ had of the Father's love to *him*," and, in consequence of this, should finally partake of a *like glory* with him.

They, his apostles, did not only act by the same power and authority derived from the Father, as he himself did whilst here on earth, but they were mightily encouraged by their divine

knowledge his Son to be sent to men in his name, and God was glorified in him, that is, by his being *raised from the dead*; this being the highest proof of his divine mission, and the ground of that honour and obedience which are due to him. The whole passage, from the 27th to the 30th verse, inclusively, deserves particular attention. Compare verse 1st. ch. xvii. and ch. xiii. 31, 32.

master to hope for better things, and to share with him hereafter in the honours and rewards of his kingdom. So it follows, (ver 24.) Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, to behold my glory which thou hast given me. And then he concludes this his solemn valedictory prayer in these words, "These have known (that is, these his apostles, *with*, and *for* whom he had been now praying) these have known that thou hast sent me. They have fully known my divine mission and authority. I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them and I in them;"—and that, at last, we may jointly partake of the promised glory in my Father's house, where there are many mansions prepared for men of approved virtue and integrity.

Thus did our blessed Lord pray,—not for *himself only*, Father, glorify thou me; but, as the benevolent friend of the whole human race and family, for *all mankind*; especially for his immediate followers, and those whom God had already given him out of the world; and not for them only, but for all them who should, in after-time, through the ministry of his apostles, or others, be brought to embrace the Gospel, and steadily adhere to the cause of truth and righteousness as
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he did. Father, I will (r) that they also whom thou hast given me, may be with me, where I am, to behold and partake of that glory which thou hast given me: it follows, for thou hast loved me, (and the like may be said of all his sincere and humble followers in every age; ver. 23. Thou hast loved *them* as thou hast loved *me*) *before the foundation of the world*. The very same reason holds equally true with respect to both.

Nor does this manner of expression, (by the way) give any, the least support to the *Antinomian* language of our *justification from eternity*,—to the doctrine of *predestination*, or of any arbitrary irreverfible decree made in favour of particular persons, &c. So long as men are men, that is, rational and free, there can be no handle

(r) *Θλω*, I desire. *Gataker de filo novi instrumenti*, p. 240. The reward expected by the true disciples of Christ in a future state, depends wholly upon the *favour of God*. Hence it is that our Lord *desires* his Father to bestow it upon them. And because they are to enjoy this reward *in his presence*, he asks for it under the term of their *being with him, where he is*. John xii. 26. If any man serve me let him follow me; and *where I am*, (or shall be. Grot.) there shall also my servant be. And ch. xiv. 3. *If* I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself, that *where I am*, there ye may be also. And by being thus admitted into his presence, they will see the glory which God *had given* him before the foundation of the world. See a short and plain commentary upon the Gospel of St. John.

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given in these words to the doctrine of an absolute election of some, to the rejection or reprobation of others. [See True Doctrine of the New Testament, &c. p. 118, note (s) 2d edition.] We can no otherwise conceive of God, or of his infinite goodness, as a moral governor, than that he has always had both a love to righteousness, truth and goodness, from everlasting, and a crown of righteousness and glory in reserve for all truly virtuous and good men; who may therefore be said to have had it *with God*, that is, in his eternal purpose and decree before the world was. It is therefore an immutable, permanent and everlasting principle; the approbation and favour of God being necessarily, unalterably founded in his *love of righteousness* (Psal. xi. 7.) not in any capricious arbitrary choice of persons, but in perfect unerring wisdom and moral rectitude. The Lord knoweth them that are his, them that are *like him*, all who bear his *moral image and resemblance*; and he will not fail to give a just and ample recompence to all righteous and good men in another world.

Thus have we taken a general view of our Saviour's admirable prayer in this chapter, not only for himself, but for all his disciples and followers, in that, and in every future age of the Christian church. No intercessionary prayer, surely, could be more seasonable and pertinent

to the occasion, more striking and moving to the audience ; and, I may add, more efficacious and prevalent with God, the supreme universal Father and friend of mankind. — And, to strengthen our faith and animate our obedience, we are assured that, as a man, one of our nature, though now exalted and glorified at the right hand of God, he is still touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and ever lives to make intercession.—In a word, the great Saviour of mankind has here set us, and all his followers, a most amiable and engaging pattern of piety to God, and of the most catholic comprehensive charity and good will to all our fellow creatures ; which will be particularly noted afterwards. At present let us attend to another useful and important lesson, suggested to us in the explication which has been now given of the passage before us.

COR. III. From what has been said, we learn *what*, and how *highly* we ought to think of Christ, or what judgment we should form of his true personal character. Jesus was the Son of God, as well as the Son of man ; and as his moral character was truly excellent, so were the honours conferred upon him. So great a personage never appeared in the world before ; one that merited so highly at the hands of God, or executed the heavenly and divine errand upon which he came with equal fidelity and success.

Though this indeed has been mentioned already, yet it must be allowed a consideration truly interesting and important, *viz.* that the glory which Christ is here said to have had with the Father, was a *peculiar* glory designed for him as the *Son of man*, one of our nature, and conferred upon him in reward of his free and voluntary obedience. And this, I should think, must be an article of much greater weight and moment than our believing his pre-existence in a state of glory with the Father before the world was. It is not only more upon a level with the understanding, and more agreeable to the purport of divine revelation, but it has a more powerful and direct tendency to operate upon the mind and impress the heart of man. When we contemplate the man Christ Jesus in this light, as one most dear to God, highly honoured and beloved of the Father, who sent him, and is now rewarded with transcendent glory in his Father's presence, we have something in our eye that is fitted above all things else to inspire and animate the human breast. We see at once the wise and gracious design of God in this wonderful dispensation of the Messiah, and the practical use that we should make of that design.

And now, that we may judge how highly and honourably we ought to think of Christ, we need only take a *short* view of what has been said relative

tive to this subject.—That he had, in the days of his flesh, or humiliation, a peculiar glory conferred upon him, as the Son of man, the promised Messiah, is beyond all doubt. Others have had a divine mission, and been invested with a sacred character, as Moses and the other prophets; but he, the man Christ Jesus, was greater than any of the sons of men, or any who have been stiled the sons of God, having the fulness of the Deity residing in him (John xiv. 10. Col. ii. 9.) It is therefore no wonder, that he acted beyond the common rate or pitch of mankind, and appeared in all his ministrations, in all his works of power and grace, to be a divine and god-like person, fully qualified and empowered to execute the high commission which God had given him. The Father was always with him; and in him was the truth and grace of God to mankind most signally displayed. So I understand the words of St. John, (chap. i. 14. *We beheld his glory*, that is, the glory of God as it shone forth in the face or person of Jesus Christ, or in his public ministry and mighty works. John and the rest of the disciples were *eye witnesses of his majesty*, and could bear testimony to him, that he was the son of God, or a most excellent and divine person; or, thus was the word, i. e. God manifest in the flesh; the power, the wisdom, the holiness and grace of God, and the

the most amiable attributes of that being who is in himself invisible, were thus displayed and made manifest to the children of men, with as much true and real glory, as God ever manifested amongst the Israelites from the ark of his presence, or in the holy of holies.

Jesus appeared all along to be the Father's beloved, or his *only begotten* son. There were testimonies of his dignity at his birth; afterwards at his baptism; when he was gloriously transformed on the holy mount; and through the whole course of his ministry. Nor were there wanting extraordinary testimonies of the divine favour and approbation, during the dark and dismal scene of his last sufferings. Even *then* he was not alone; he was not forsaken; for God was with him to support, and strengthen, and set before him the crown of victory, the glorious prize of immortal honour and felicity.—But the glory of his *miracles* was what gave the greatest lustre to his character! Herein did the glory of God eminently shine forth in the man Christ Jesus. His reply to *Martha* in the case of *Lazarus* is very observable, (John xi. 40.) said I not unto thee, that thou shouldest see the *glory of God*? that is, the *power* which God had communicated to him, and which he demonstrated by raising her brother from the dead. The power, the life-giving power, which he exerted in this instance,

instance, to say nothing of his other miracles, was a specimen or proof of that universal dominion and power which God had given him *over all flesh*, or the whole of mankind. (verse 2d of this chap.) Or, the power which he exercised in this and other like instances, was an emblem of his *future administration*, rule and government, as the appointed Saviour and head of the church, (John v. 24. and following verses.)—And if we add to this, that God the Father hath actually exalted his son Jesus to the highest dignity, dominion, and glory, as the Lord and heir of all things, with what wisdom and propriety is it, that he hath commanded us to honour and reverence his son, and hearken to his divine instructions; (Acts iii. 22.) and what superior and lasting honours must be due to him, even next to the one supreme God and Father who sitteth on the throne? To him therefore be glory and dominion, to him be honour and power everlasting.—But there is another practical and useful lesson which we cannot well overlook, if we consider the true import and propriety of this our Saviour's last prayer, and attend to the particular circumstances that gave rise to it, *viz.*

COR. IV. Integrity of heart and life, and a conscious sense of the love of God, is a perpetual source of comfort and joy to all good men,

men, in proportion to their faith and piety. In other words, nothing can administer such relief and comfort to the human mind at the hour of death, or in any season of adversity and affliction, as the consciousness of a well spent life; the faithful discharge of our duty being the only solid ground of hope and assurance towards God, (John iii. 21.) “If our hearts, that is, our *consciences* condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.” This indeed is an eternal and immutable principle, founded in the nature and reason of things; but it is no small advantage to have our Saviour’s own example to recommend and enforce it. And this is what we ought to notice, in particular—that, was not our Saviour a man formed like one of us, his moral and divine instructions would have but little influence on mankind. They would indeed be destitute of all rational support and foundation upon any other principle than what I have all along supposed, *namely*, that Jesus was a man, one in our nature, and that his example was accordingly designed to direct us in our duty, as well as to afford us the greatest encouragement and consolation in the regular and faithful discharge thereof. How happy for us we ourselves are *men*, and partake of the same nature with him; that we have here all the advantage and benefit of the best example amidst
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of Christ's pre-existence.

the various services and trials of life ! Our Saviour's personal character, as I have endeavoured to represent it, is what sets his example in the most forcible and engaging light, and will naturally suggest to us many useful reflections which have a *plain, moral,* and practical tendency; by which we may form a judgment of the truth and importance of all doctrines which pass in the world under the colour of divine revelation. If they have not this practical tendency or design, they cannot be worthy of God, or agreeable to that natural understanding and reason which God hath given us.

Now the truth and propriety of this remark appears to be fully illustrated in the petition which our Lord here made to his Father at the close of his public ministry. And, if we advert to some particular circumstances, it will afford us many useful reflections.—As for instance; Jesus knew that the time of his death was now drawing near;—and that he might fortify himself against all the terrors of it, he calmly surveys his past life and ministry, and being conscious to his own integrity, that he had acquitted himself with all fidelity in the work which God had given him to do, his holy innocent soul rejoiced within him, and “lifting up his eyes to heaven, (verse 1st.) he said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy son, that thy son also may glorify

glorify thee." And this his prayer was soon heard and answered. His consummate virtue, which had been approved and made manifest under various trials, was at length highly honoured and rewarded. A distinguishing glory was prepared for him in his Father's presence, as the son of his love.—And what an encouraging thought must this be, when we consider and look upon Christ as our pattern, and follow his example in a holy, obedient, and well ordered life? His peace and joy, as one observes, must in some degree at least be the portion and blessing of all his faithful disciples, all his humble followers in this world; and his exaltation and glory be the original, or idea, by which our's shall, in its due proportion, be formed and modelled."

Now this will suggest, and may serve to remind us of the following things; namely, that there is a work and duty prescribed to every one of us, by the conscientious performance of which we may in some measure glorify God on earth as our Saviour did;—that there is a great and glorious reward provided for all righteous and good men in the kingdom of God;—and that the faithful discharge of our duty (as I said before) is the only foundation upon which we can build a rational hope and assurance of it: this must prove the goodness of our claim, even our
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doing the will of God from the heart, our discharging the duties of our general calling, as men and Christians, and those of our particular profession in every office and station which God hath assigned us. — And it may farther admonish us, that diligence and industry are necessary in improving the time of life, or in working the works which God hath given us to do while it is day: herein our Saviour hath set us the best example, (John ix. 4. Acts x. 38.) and has, at the same time, given us the greatest possible encouragement; assuring us, that our labour, diligence, and perseverance in it will be abundantly rewarded; (Luke xii. 32. Mat. xiii. 43.) — As all the sincere and humble followers of Jesus have a crown of righteousness set before them, as they may rejoice in hope of the glory of God, so hereby should they be quickened and animated in running the Christian race, and look with pleasure for the blessed prize of immortality, even the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Phil. iii. 14.

This indeed is evident from the example of many virtuous and good men; whose comfort in death is wont to be proportionable to the piety and sincerity of their lives. Herein the apostle *Paul*, in particular, was an eminent and shining pattern, (2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8.) I am now ready to be offered, says he, and the time of my dissolution

solution is at hand. Nor am I at all discouraged at the prospect of it; for I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, and preserved my fidelity. So that I have now nothing to do, but to wait for the glorious recompence of all my labours and sufferings. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, &c.—We all have some fight or conflict to maintain, some post to occupy and make good.—And to adorn our province, and fill up every station well, should be our great concern. We can no otherwise acquit ourselves with a good conscience towards God, or man. The ground of hope and confidence towards God, is one and the same thing *in all*. Or the pleasing God and obeying his commands, ever was, and ever will be the only way to recommend us to his favor and acceptance.

Was the man Christ Jesus rewarded with honour and glory in his Father's more immediate presence? (for this his prayer was no doubt *fully* heard and answered) So shall all conscientious and upright men, in their measure and proportion, be hereafter rewarded with rich and abundant honour. They shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, (Mat. xiii. 43.) Now, what a spur and incentive should this be to diligence and industry in the proper work and business of life? Nothing, surely, can be a more prevailing

prevailing motive than this to a life of strict piety and virtue. Nothing can influence more strongly to purity of thought and affection, as well as a regularity of outward behaviour. We should learn hence, to improve all the abilities and advantages that we enjoy in the best manner, as so many talents for which we are answerable to the supreme disposer of all things. We should mark the road to happiness by looking unto Jesus, by treading in his steps, and endeavouring to walk as he walked. We should every one, in his proper sphere and station, eye him as one who is now made perfect through his obedience and sufferings. We should eye him as the model of our final happiness, who has promised that where he is there shall his servants be.—What remains then but, that, in a course of holy obedience and industry, we now aspire to some distinguishing feat, to a seat of honour and glory in the kingdom of God? being well assured that our sincerity, constancy, and perseverance in well-doing, or in patient suffering, will not be in vain. All our opportunities for making a proficiency in knowledge and virtue, since they are in their own nature so absolutely uncertain, should be hastily and diligently improved, that we may answer the chief purpose of our being here, and raise our souls to the heavenly man-

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sions of eternal joy and felicity ;—nay, that by the eminence of our virtue and goodness we may not barely gain admittance into the kingdom of heaven, but be distinguished, and stand high in honour, amongst the inhabitants of these glorious and blisful regions. Thus shall we best answer the ultimate design and view of the gospel revelation, and make it appear that we live under the influence of the true Christian faith and doctrine ; the New Testament being throughout, and in all its parts, as I now said, a *practical* and *moral* institution, such as is highly worthy of God, and admirably fitted to further and promote the best interests of mankind.

In a word, the foundation of Christ's prayer was his voluntary obedience to the will of God, and his fidelity in executing the important commission which God had given him. And as this was a source of peculiar comfort, and a mighty support to him at the close of his life, we should all learn from it so to live, that, whenever we come to die, we may be able to look, with an inward appropriating pleasure, for the blessed hope of that eternal life, which is the gift of God in Christ Jesus.—And here we cannot but remark the divine *plerophory*, as I may call it, or that well grounded hope and assurance with which our Saviour anticipates the future glory.

“ Father,

“Father, the hour is come; glorify thy son. I have glorified thee on earth; and now, O Father, glorify thou me.” There is a strong and forcible argument or plea evidently couched in this petition, as appears throughout the whole of this chapter. I have finished the work, &c. I have manifested thy name. I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me. I have kept them in thy name. I have sent them into the world, and the like. (See ver. 6, 8, 12, 14, 18, 22.) g. d. I have done all things according to the commission I received, and now, O Father, glorify thy son. Such was the faith, the confidence, and joy of the man Christ Jesus, when he was about to leave the world. See in particular that passage (chap. xiii. 31.) where we read that when Judas was gone out, (i. e. in order to betray him) Jesus said to the rest of his disciples, “Now is the son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.” g. d. Now is the time when, having manifested the glory of God in my life, I shall further manifest it in my sufferings and death. A clear indication this, of his firmness, composure, and placid state of mind. Thus should we all learn to meet death, in any form, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of the faith, &c. Heb. xii. 2.

In short, our blessed Saviour here prays, as any truly pious and good man may do, after he hath served his generation according to the will of God; that is, with a filial trust and confidence in the great, the common Father and friend of mankind, who perfectly knows how to distinguish every degree of moral worth and excellence, and will finally reward every man according to his works, and according to his own free bounty and munificence.

Now this is the true and proper use that we should make of the New Testament doctrine concerning Jesus Christ. It should, I say, particularly teach us this important lesson amongst others; namely, that conscious virtue and integrity is the great foundation of hope and comfort to all sincerely virtuous and good men. It is so at this day. It will be so in every age: And it was so, in a peculiar and eminent sense, to our blessed Lord himself; who is proposed to us as the pattern of our obedience, and the captain of our salvation, or (the ἀρχηγός) the leader on to victory and glory.

V. The last corollary or inference that I shall mention, and which closely follows from what I have now said is, that the *merits of Christ* are properly and strictly speaking *exemplary*. They are so in a truly apostolic sense. See 1 Pet. i. d chapter

chapter, from the 19th to the 24th verse, inclusively. And they are in every view admirably fitted and intended, both to instruct us in our duty, and to encourage our constancy and perseverance in the zealous and faithful discharge of it, whatever trials and services we may be called to in this world.—Our Saviour's merit evidently lay in his *voluntary* and *unreserved* obedience to the will of his Father who sent him, and particularly, in what I may call his *suffering* virtues,—in his meek resigned spirit and behaviour under the manifold insults and indignities that were offered him, and in his truly compassionate, charitable and forgiving spirit, notwithstanding the cruel and injurious treatment that he met with from the hands of his merciless and implacable enemies. It was his own singular merit in these and in other instances of a most exemplary *piety* and *benevolence*, that invites and encourages our imitation, and supports a reasonable hope and expectation in all true Christians with respect to a future state of happiness and glory. A merit that is moral and rewardable, can, in the very nature of things, be no other than *personal*. The reward of every moral agent will be finally determined by his own personal righteousness, and that only. Nay, the merits of Christ himself, however great and excellent, cannot possibly be

ours, or be attributed and imputed to any other than to *himself*. That is,—they are incapable of being *transferred*, or reckoned *ours* any further than we follow his steps.

As to his painful sufferings and death, *simply* considered,—it is most certain, there could be nothing in *them* that was in any wise pleasing and agreeable to God, abstracted from his meek and patient behaviour under them, and his ready and dutiful submission to the will of his Father, in order to answer and subserve the great and important design of his *ministry*, which was, in short, to enlighten and reform the world, and to save men from their sins,—to open the kingdom of heaven, and point out the true and only way of life and happiness to sinners of the *human race*. And this salvation, this happiness, is fully ascertained in the gospel of Christ to all sincerely virtuous and good men, who have preserved their integrity, or have been recovered by true repentance to a state of moral rectitude.—This, I think, is an intelligible and easy doctrine,—and what must approve itself to all the natural principles of reason and equity, as most worthy of the supreme being. But, to represent the sufferings and the death of Christ in the light which many have done, is, to my apprehension, altogether as *unscriptural*, as it is in itself *incomprehensible*.

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The excellent *instructions* which our Saviour hath given us; his own personal *virtues*; the bright *example*, and the high *reward* of his obedience;—these are what we Christians are called to contemplate, and what we are more concerned with than any imaginary satisfaction, or supposed atonement made to Deity. Or this is, in truth, far more acceptable to God, and of much more avail and efficacy, as to us, than any expiatory offering or sacrifice. We are assured; that God was so well pleased with the virtue and obedience of his son, the man Christ Jesus, as to reward it with high celestial honour and glory; and we cannot surely doubt, but that he, the same righteous Lord who loveth righteousness, will accept of and reward the sincere piety and obedience of all good men, in their measure, without the interposed sufferings, or merit of any other imputed to them. Christ, and all truly pious and good men are to be considered here, in one and the same light. *His* expectations and hopes, with respect to the favour of God, did all rest upon the essential, free, and immutable goodness of God; and so must *ours*. *His* high reward of honour and glory was founded on the superior excellence of his moral and virtuous character; and in like manner should *our* hopes and expectations entirely and solely rest

upon the same foundation of *moral fitness* and *congruity*. Thus is Christ Jesus the great exemplar, and so far are we his genuine disciples, we shall be proportionably rewarded.

It is very observable, that a *personal moral rectitude* has been the basis of human hope and confidence in all ages of the world. *Job, David, Hezekiah, Nehemiah, Daniel*, and others, have all pleaded their sincerity or integrity in the sight of God (*f*). And they expected to find
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(*t*) See particularly Psal. vii. 8. Isaiah xxxviii. 3. Nehem. v. 19. and chap. xiii. 14. And the same observation will stand good when carried into the writings of the New Testament. Every *Christian* doctrine supposes, or inculcates, the truth and importance of this moral principle. This was a doctrine not only taught by all the prophets, but by our Lord himself in all his instructions. Nay, “this was the basis of his own confidence, that he did always do those things that pleased his God and Father, (John viii. 29.) And none will he finally own, but such as *do* the will of his Father who is in heaven, (Mat. vii. 21.) The apostles do accordingly declare this to be the ground of their own confidence and rejoicing, even the testimony of conscience to their simplicity and godly sincerity. (2 Cor. i. 12. 1 Peter iii. 15, 16. 1 John iii. 19, 20, 21.) If our hearts do not condemn us, then have we confidence towards God.—There is (as one justly observes) no other possible ground of confidence, but the consciousness of our own sincerity, uprightness and integrity. And the quitting this for a fanciful refuge in the righteousness of another, as the reason of
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favour alone from the *essential goodness* of God, or the *placability* of the divine nature. It is a conscious sense of every man's own uprightness and integrity that must enable him to hope in God. And if his piety and virtue resemble that which shone in our Lord's temper and behaviour, it will be finally recompensed with abundant honour. There is therefore, (as one justly observes) "no kind of reason to suppose the merits and excellence of Christ, or his *rewardability*, capable of being transferred to us; or in any sense reckoned ours, farther than we imitate him, and attain a resemblance of his divine temper and spirit: for we might with as much truth conclude that God's righteousness, holiness, or perfection can by imputation become ours, because we are exhorted to be righteous as he is righteous; holy as he is holy; and perfect as he is perfect (u).

our justification, has no better support, than the chimerical church treasury merits, dealt out by the *Römish priest*, as shall best suit the purposes of his power and profit among the deluded. But, says St. John, let no man deceive you, for he who does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous, 1 John iii. 7. St. Paul renounced no other righteousness of his own, but the *ritual*, on which he had made a superstitious and unsafe dependence, Phil. iii. 4, 12." See Dr. Fleming's Survey, p. 204, 205.

(u) See an excellent tract intitled, the Merits of Christ exemplary, in 1761.

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And the same may be said of CHRIST's righteousness, holiness and obedience: they cannot be ours by any imputation,—they being only personal and meritorious as to himself. These, and other characters, which are of a strictly *moral nature*, worth or excellence, cannot, I say, belong to us, so as to be properly accounted *ours*, or turn, in the least, to our advantage and benefit, any otherwise than as we ourselves are conformed to the *image* of Christ; that is, are formed into a divine likeness, and made partakers of the divine nature; this being one great end and design of our Saviour's coming into the world, to give us a lively representation of those virtues and graces which will be ever acceptable and well pleasing to God.—He has accordingly gone before us, as a pattern of all righteousness and goodness, or the brightest, most lovely, and perfect image of Deity. And, as our divine teacher, he has exhorted and commanded us to imitate God, as our *Father*, and to follow him as *dear children*. He is represented to us as God's *only begotten* son, most holy and beloved,—and in him all the Father shineth, in the brightest rays of truth and grace, of divine wisdom, benignity and mercy. In him we behold, as in a glass the glory and grace of that one God who raised him up to be the great prophet and Saviour

viour of mankind. In his life and doctrine, in his example and precepts, he hath *shewn us the Father*, and pointed out to us the sure and certain road to happiness.

And further,—Jesus, being one in our nature, or a partaker of flesh and blood as we are, his example was properly *human*; and the doctrines which he taught and published to the world were admirably and wisely adapted to direct us, and all his followers in every age, how we ought to walk and to please God. His gospel exhibits to us not only the plainest precepts to direct, but the brightest and best example to guide us in the way to virtue and glory, to immortal life and happiness. And this is our peculiar privilege, that, as *Christians*, (under the singular light and advantages of the gospel) we have now the greatest possible advantages put into our hands for working out our eternal salvation. And—that the peculiar doctrines of our most holy religion have this plain moral aptitude and tendency, is clearly seen and illustrated, as in all our Saviour's discourses and parables, so particularly in his sermon on the mount, and in this his last farewell prayer with, and for, his disciples.

In all we cannot but see and admire a disposition and spirit that is truly amiable and excellent,

lent, and worthy of the greatest character and personage that ever appeared in the world,—In humility and meekness of spirit;—in a candid, friendly and forgiving temper;—in an exemplary patience, contentment and self-denial; and especially in that exalted *piety* and warm *benevolence* which breaths out, and appears to animate his whole soul. In this most excellent prayer recorded by his beloved disciple *John*, we cannot but see and confess, that he infinitely surpassed all the children of men, all the prophets and messengers of God that ever went before him.

Such was his love to *God*, and such his love to *mankind*, his *filial piety*, and *divine philanthropy*, that it shone out with a peculiar and eminent lustre in every part of his life and ministry. These he *exemplified*, and these he *taught* and *inculcated*, as the true and only principle of all virtue, and what will most effectually recommend us to the favour of God. *Jesus*, our divine master and law-giver, and the best philosopher that ever appeared in the world, hath taught us, that right affection towards God and man, is the sum of morality, the substance of all religion, (Mat. xxii. 37. Rom. xiii. 10.) This is the bond or cement of perfection, as the apostle calls it, (Col. iii. 14.) And our Saviour himself has, in other terms, very strongly expressed the same sentiment. I in them, and thou

thou in me, &c. I pray that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, (John xvii. 21, 23.) plainly intimating that where this principle of love exerts itself with any life and vigour, there is a like union between Christ and them, as there is betwixt the Father and him; or, that the unity betwixt Christ and his Father, Christ and them, did wholly rest and centre here.

The tie or cement was one and the same, and the interest which he and his disciples both had in the Father's love, was an *inseparable and joint* interest, being entirely founded upon one and the same principle operating in Christ and them.—It is very plain from the context, that, as all true Christians are *one* with Christ, they have a special undoubted interest in this prayer which he made to the Father,—that they may now entertain like expectations, and cherish the same hopes, as he himself did, having a like title or claim to the kingdom of heaven,—that kingdom which God had prepared for them that love him: for the whole tenor of the Gospel assures every sincere Christian, that he has, in *his* degree and proportion, the same joy, the same crown, the same reward set before him, as Christ himself had (Eph. ii. 6. Rev. iii. 21. Luke xii. 32.)—This is our Saviour's own doctrine. It is expressly and clearly taught in this chapter, as well

well as elsewhere, (John xiv. 20, 21.) — And nothing can be better fitted to encourage and animate his disciples and followers in every age.

Should it be said here, “if Christ and they are thus *one*,—one and spirit and interest, one in hope and prospect;—whence is it, that so many professing Christians are no more *one*, no more at *unity* among themselves?” I answer very briefly, this is owing to an inattention to the principle and spirit of their religion; for in such proportion, or so far as the principle of Christian love and charity lives and operates in the hearts of men, they will of course walk in brotherly concord and unity, always pursuing and jointly carrying on one grand design, *viz.* the glory of God, the edification of the church, and, as much as in them lies, the general welfare and good of all mankind: for this is a principle which always did, and ever will operate, more or less, in the breast of every Christian, every truly virtuous and good man.

Here let me observe further,—Our Saviour, *first of all*, taught and inculcated upon his disciples that great and leading precept, the LOVE OF GOD, which has been always considered, both under the law and the gospel, as the true animating principle of obedience. This was the principle upon which Christ himself acted; and upon this principle must all those act, who would be
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looking for the blessed hope, the great promise of eternal life. And, as our *Saviour's* merit lay in his supreme love to God, the same principle should animate us and all his followers. What that principle is, and how it operates, St. John has very plainly and expressly told us, [1 John v. 3.] “ This is the love of God that we keep his commandments.”—And, that *bercin* we should all learn to imitate our divine master, he himself hath expressly taught us, urging upon us this most powerful and engaging motive; As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. It follows—If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love: even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.—If we would secure the love of the Father and the Son, we should learn to keep the commandments of God. And thus, in true *filial piety, obedience, and love*, our *Saviour* hath set us the most amiable and perfect pattern.

And, as in the supreme love of God, [that ruling affection in every good mind] so likewise in the most diffusive CHARITY, in a general disinterested love and good-will to mankind, his example should engage the particular attention of all his professed friends and followers. As no one approached nearer to Deity in moral rectitude and perfection, so no man ever carried benevolence to that height, or pursued a design so extensively

tenfively useful and divinely great, as the man Chrift Jefus; no one ever enforced it in ftronger terms, or exhibited a brighter example of it, in his behaviour and treatment of all mankind, enemies as well as friends. His heart, indeed, was the feat of every amiable and worthy affection: goodnefs and benignity, acts of mercy, kindnefs, and compaffion, were his delight. And that benevolence which he recommended was of the moft exalted kind, even the perfection of God's moral character, a perfection which is his higheft glory, what influences all his operations, and is, I may call it, a constant immutable difpofition to communicate happinefs to all his reasonable creatures, fo far as they are fit and capable fubjects of it. Herein we are called to learn of Chrift, and to follow him as the living image of the invifible God.

LOVE was the *characteriftic* of his religion; and this is a diftinguifhing mark of all thofe who love the Lord Jefus Chrift in fincerity [*εν ἀφθαρσία*] who are found and uncorrupted in their *morals*, however they may differ, as to fome things in their opinion and judgment. This is my commandment, fays he,—and by this fhall all men know that ye are my difciples, if ye have love one to another, (John xv. 12. 1 Eph. ii. 8.) — In one word, love to God and man is the fpring and fource of all true religion and morality, of every

every personal and social virtue ; and herein was our Saviour truly exemplary : or, his singular merit appeared in both with an uncommon lustre, his example being admirably accommodated to the state and circumstances of mankind in general, and peculiarly adapted to inspire the human breast with a noble, generous ardor and emulation to excel in virtue, in all moral worth, and true goodness. In this light, no example, surely, can be more interesting, or what a sinful degenerate world, a race of imperfect beings as we are, stood in greater need of. His most excellent and amiable character did more particularly appear and shine forth, as I now said, in these two eminent branches of it, his signal piety and charity, his love to God and good-will to men. The doctrine, example, and life of Jesus ; the spirit and genius of his religion were truly admirable, Every of its peculiar institutes were truly divine, and well worthy of all acceptance ; calculated to promote the glory of God, and the virtue and happiness of mankind.

And this naturally leads me to make a very interesting remark, which the intelligent reader may perceive that I have all along had in view, namely, that, as the moral tendency of any proposition, or doctrine, is what gives it all its importance, so such an interpretation of the character and appointments of Christ, as best secures

this effect on the human mind, is the most conclusive evidence of its divine veracity. It appears to me, that all *genuine evangelical* truths must have this divine stamp or signature upon them before we can yield any rational assent to them; or, in other words, that all doctrines which are proposed to us under the colour and pretence of a divine revelation, should, in the language of St. Paul, be doctrines *according to godliness*, (1 Tim. vi. 3.) or such as have an obvious fitness and a manifest tendency to promote the interests of *real religion*, the cause of virtue, piety, and charity; or of that holiness of heart and life which is the great and ultimate design of the Christian revelation. And I cannot but think, that the doctrine, which I have been endeavouring to support and establish, has this plain and direct tendency, this signal proof of its *truth* and *authenticity*, of its *usefulness* and *importance*.

This, at least, appears to me a strong and presumptive argument, that the said doctrine is most agreeable to the whole tenor of the New Testament, as well as to the sense of the most ancient and primitive Christian writers; and that this passage in St. John, as well as many others which have been plausibly urged in proof of our Saviour's eternal generation and pre-existence, carry little or no weight in them.—Sure I am, that the principles which have been advanced in
favour

favour of the *Athanasian Trinity*, are not only injurious to the Christian revelation, but even destructive of it; and would equally destroy the pretensions of any revelation whatever. If any, however, can *understand* that system of theology, or find it revealed in scripture, they will certainly do well to receive it. But let no one, who cannot entertain and relish the same sentiments or ideas, be censured and branded for an heretic, so long as he is upright and impartial in his enquiries after truth, and in paying all proper and due regard to scripture evidence. If what has been said should any ways contribute to remove or soften long and stubborn prejudices, or give satisfaction to any honest or well-disposed minds; especially, if it may tend to set this, or any other disputed points relative to it, in a better and clearer light than they have hitherto appeared in, the end and view of the author will be answered.

He can truly say, that it is with a modest diffidence in himself, and with all becoming deference to others, that he submits what has been offered upon the present subject, to the deliberate attention and judgment of every impartial and candid reader.—To adopt the language of a sober and moderate divine, “I am sensible that human authority lies on the other side of the question. And upon this account I think the
doctrine

doctrine ought to be treated with *modesty*. This respect is certainly due to received and established opinions. But I can by no means admit, that, because a doctrine has the advantage of age and possession, it has any infallible mark of *truth*; or that time alone can render it so sacred, that it should not be controverted and opposed at all. Such sentiments can never be consistently asserted by those who are persuaded of the lawfulness of our reformation."—

To conclude. — As *sincerity* and *charity* will always stand in the highest account with God, and are the surest marks of true Christian orthodoxy, so I am verily persuaded, with an ancient writer, (Aug. de mendacia) that, if the love of truth makes men err, such error cannot be dangerous;—*Nunquam errari tutius existimo, quam cum in nimio amore veritatis erratur.*

6 MA. 50

THE END.

